'It's a man's game': managing identities in ambiguous contexts

Fiona Gill

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Declaration

I have composed this thesis on the basis of my own research.

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Abstract

This research examines the ways in which people manage ambiguous or problematic identities. I argue that the strategies of identity-management used are based on the ways in which different identities are performed in particular contexts. A case study of a women's rugby team located in Bordertown, on the English-Scottish border, is used to examine this. These women possess two ambiguous identities. First, by playing a 'man's game', they find themselves both integrated into and excluded from a masculine context. Second, by virtue of their location, they belong to and are rejected from both the English and Scottish national communities. The gender ambiguity is found to be irreconcilable. They are, however, able to reconcile their national ambiguity by asserting their membership of a recognisable third group - their local community. By asserting the shared bond of problematic nationality, they diminish the marginalisation caused by their gender ambiguity, and distract observers from their problematic gender identity. The performance of an ambiguous national identity, then, masks the continuing difficulties caused by the gender ambiguity. Thus strategies of identity management are found to be dependent on the social context of the individuals and identities involved, and their ability to use the interactions between different social contexts and identities to mask the ambiguity. As a result of this research, a greater understanding of the ways identity is formed and performed is reached.

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Chapter 1:
Setting the stage of identity

This is a case-study of a group of women rugby players based on the Scottish-English border. The team, known as the Jesters, are used to explore how people handle identities in ambiguous contexts. The focus, then, is on ambiguity in identity rather than identity itself. Two forms of identity are examined; national and gender identity; and the relationship between the two forms an important part of the discussion. The aim of this chapter is to give some analytical context to the remainder of this research.

The Jesters are based in Bordertown in the Scottish borders. This is an area that has traditionally possessed an ambiguous place in the national imaginations of both Scotland and England. Bordertown's inhabitants seem not to belong wholly to either England or Scotland, living somewhere in the margins, marking the edge of identity. Sports teams representing such an area inevitably carry with them its associations of ambiguity. Added to this is the fact that rugby is a game which is played primarily by men for men. The Jesters therefore also possess an ambiguous gender identity, as it is not clear if they are to be considered masculine or feminine.

My primary interest is in the ambiguity inherent in such marginal identities and so the boundaries of the identities, and the corresponding issues of belonging, acceptance, power and control form the focus of this study. The following section of this chapter will examine some of these issues and then review some of the literature in the sociology of sport, explaining why a sports team was chosen to examine these issues, as well as critiquing some of the uses sport has been put to academically.

What will be seen throughout is that the ambiguity of the identities under investigation is based upon the individuals' and groups' simultaneous integration with and separation from the contexts being examined. The Jesters are both acknowledged as being a part of rugby sub-culture but also entirely distinct from it. Likewise, the inhabitants of Bordertown are both English and Scottish, but also neither. As a result of this sense of belonging and not, they represent a challenge to others in terms of how they are to be handled. And they themselves must find a way of balancing their distinction and belonging. The strategies used by both groups form the subject of this study.

The Jesters have a difficult time of this because they are marginalised both from their national communities, but also from their local one. In order to overcome this double exclusion, they must show strong similarities to their local community. This will enable them to disguise their gender ambiguity through the promotion of their national ambiguity and membership of their local community.

Two different dynamics of identity are developed throughout. First is the way in which gender identities are formed. These occur on a large scale, and are normalised through bodily activity and performance. On the other hand, we have the dynamic of 'place identity' revolving around the position of a community in a wider society. Marginalisation is geographical, and social exclusion may follow as a result of this. As a result, we see the performance occurring in response to the marginalisation, whereas the marginalisation examined in terms of the gender identity occurs because of the performance. One is the catalyst, the other a response. Because of this, there are different management strategies available for each, and their interaction becomes quite specific.

The following chapter gives an account of the methods used for data collection. As this is an ethnography of a rugby team, qualitative methods were used, a combination of participant-observation and semi-structured interviews being preferred. Some of the problems involved with this research are also flagged and briefly discussed.

Chapter 3 introduces Bordertown as a place and an ambiguous context. However, the main focus will be the rugby club and the Jesters, their social context and provides the reader with background information to allow a fuller understanding of subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 discusses the social context of rugby and rugby culture in more detail, concentrating particularly on the team and gendered aspects of it. This highlights the importance of masculinity in rugby, and makes the Jesters' ambiguous identity clear.

Chapter 5 analyses some of the methods used by the Jesters to assert control over the ambiguity. Ultimately, however, it argues that they are unsuccessful and must find another way of handling the ambiguity and corresponding marginalisation. This is done through the use of their ambiguous national identity.

National ambiguity is raised in Chapter 6. This discussion establishes Bordertown as an ambiguous national context, and discusses the embrace of the ambiguity by the town's inhabitants. This allows them to promote a specifically local identity which makes the ambiguity less of a problem for them. Chapter 7 discusses the Jesters' performance of the ambiguous national identity, and the ways this allows them to become part of the local community of Bordertown. This is done through their acceptance as representatives of the town, and enables them to use their national ambiguity as a way of deflecting attention away from their ambiguous gender identity.

Chapter 8 forms the conclusion and draws the disparate threads of this work together. Ultimately I argue that ambiguity is not necessarily an empowering or liberating concept. Indeed it can be a source of great upset and disturbance, as evidenced by the Jesters. However, it is possible for people to control their identities only if they are able to utilise other identities or perform other identities successfully. In this sense, identities are considered roles or performances where one performance can successfully distract attention from another. The importance of understanding the social context of the identities, the dynamics of power inherent in social interaction and the skill of the performers are all discussed.

What is identity?

I have introduced the topic of this research as being identity, or identities, and the ways in which people manage them in ambiguous contexts. This chapter develops some of the theoretical aspects of this work, concentrating particularly on the social and performative parts of identity formation and management. This relies on an understanding of identity which is social, meaning that identity depends on interaction between social actors, and on the context in which these interactions take place. Identity is best understood as shifting, multiple and contingent, and an understanding of how it is managed in any context cannot take place in isolation from an understanding of other identities and contexts which influence the individual involved. Because of this, the best way of examining identity is to look at it in situations where it is in flux, and with a strong awareness of what other identities may be influencing an individual's actions.

This analysis depends on an appreciation of the performative nature of identity. As a contingent and social phenomenon, identity is best understood as a performance. This

performance, or the notion of a social 'actor', is a useful analogy for what happens because it uses the importance of both social context and social interaction in how and identity works. This was most famously used by Goffman, and this discussion opens with a look at the ways in which he used acting as an analogy to identity. This is then extended to look at situations where identity is performed in the context of sport, gender and national identity. Running throughout this is the theme of ambiguity in identity, and the reasons why identity is best examined in the contexts where it is ambiguous.

Our understanding of identity is based around the recognition that it is socially constructed, and that it cannot be defined in simplistic terms. Rather it must be understood as a complex set of behaviours, actions and labels which determine and are determined by our interactions with others. Specifically, identity must be seen as being a simplified way of talking about social relationships and how we see ourselves, rather than as something which is somehow essential or fixed.

This represents a shift in our understanding of how identity works. Hall (1992) analyses this shift as being in response to changes in the economic and social construction of Western society. These changes resulted in a move away from a "fixed or existentialist conception of identity . . . which . . . has been taken to define the very core or essence of our being" (Hall, 1992: 275), to an understanding of ourselves as 'subjects' - a term implying reflexivity and an appreciation of the relationship between us and our society. We are therefore embedded in social context:

> An 'identity' is not a thing; it is a short-hand description for ways of talking about the self and community . . . Ways of talking, or ideological discourses, do not develop in social vacuums, but they are related to forms of life.
>
> (Billig, 1997: 60)

Billig's analysis of how identity works highlights the importance of social interaction in determining identity. The concept of 'identity' is understood as being a way of speaking about something, specifically about a social relationship. This dialogue, between individual and society, takes something from each, and allows each party to reach an understanding of who or what an individual or group should be seen as. Identity is as much about perception and representation as about the expression of individuality and the self.

This allows us to reach an understanding of identity as being multiple, fluid and responsive to changing social conditions and contexts (Rutherford, 1990: 24; Hall, 1997: 4; Roseneil and Seymour, 1999: 1). Identities are 'done' by people, rather than defining them:

> Identity is not `just there', it must always be established. This adds two . . . meanings to our catalogue: to classify things or persons, and to associate one*self with* something or someone else . . . Each locates identity within the ebb and flow of practice and process; they are both things that people do.
>
> (Jenkins, 1999: 4, emphasis in original)

When one asserts an identity, one is asserting what relationship one has with a specific group, person or ideology. And that group has the power to deny or support the asserted identity. The identity options open to us are always circumscribed by the social circumstances in which we live (Roseneil and Seymour, 1999: 2). We are always *identified* at least as much as we *identify*. However, it also emphasises the importance of social context and other identities in our choices and performances of identities. They do not grow out of nothing and we are always constrained in our choice of them by external factors:

> Our economic situation, our spatial location, our physical capabilities and bodily appearance, our relational responsibilities, our age, our family histories . . . impact upon our identity choices.
>
> (Roseneil and Seymour, 1999: 2)

It is this dialogue, between an individual and their society, which forms the focus of this investigation of identity. As will be shown, the Jesters choose and perform the identity of 'rugby players' but yet are limited in this choice because of their gender. In terms of their national identity, they are forced to perform an ambiguous nationality because of the organisation of the national context they live in. Where they are determines their ambiguity. It is this limitation, along with the coincidence of another ambiguous, fluid identity and social context, which allows the exploration of how identity management and performance are constantly socially determined.

The effects of this social determination of identity and its corresponding impact on the way people behave and see themselves were the subject of Goffman's work on *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1990). First published in 1959, it suggests that identity may be best

understood as a series of roles which individuals take on in response to the circumstances they find themselves in. He cites Park to make his point:

> It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role . . . It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves.
>
> (Park in Goffman, 1990: 30)

The analogy of role-playing, acting, and performance is apt as it encompasses both the ability of individuals to be flexible in their choice of roles, and the appropriate tailoring of performance to audience, and the importance of social context, or audience. The audience must observe the actor or actors to establish who they are, but the actors must also take into account their audience's expectations regarding their behaviour.

This performative aspect of identity is used in the analysis of various types of identity. For example, the term 'gender role' is used to describe the appropriate behaviour of men and women (Connell, 1995: 21) and gender identity itself is established to have basis more in performance in response to social expectations, than in biological characteristics (Oakley, 1985: 164). It has also been argued that all identity is developed primarily from social perceptions of our bodies, their appearance and use, and the ways in which they interact with the physical world around us (Young, 1990: 148). Another example of this is found in the rituals which surround the expression of nationhood, the glorification of war and parades, international sporting events, the daily raising of the flag (Billig, 1997: 39). All of these actions characterise national identity as a performance which takes place on a society-wide and regular footing. Identity can be seen as a performance as it is written into all of our daily behaviours, in the way we interact with each other and the ways groups interact.

This interaction takes place as groups attempt to establish membership. Identity is about inclusion and similarity, and exclusion and difference, and the ability of groups to establish their difference from others (Cohen, 1986: 1). It is very much about where a boundary may be drawn about an identity, and in what contexts this boundary is important. In the case of Bordertown, the identity of the local community and its corresponding gender norms mean that the Jesters are marginalised. In this case, the important boundary is that drawn around acceptable feminine behaviour. However, in another context, this boundary ceases to matter

as the ambiguity of national identity and the local identity is important. Here, the Jesters' national identities are their passport into the community while others are marginalised. How and where these boundaries are drawn are crucial in the process of determining identity.

These boundaries may be social (Barth, 1970: 15; Shields, 1992 : 3), as in gender identity, or territorial, such as national borders (Anderson, 1996: 189). In this study, both types are examined. Where these boundaries are drawn depends on how the group is interacting with another:

> the boundary . . . is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished.
>
> (Cohen, 1993: 12)

Therefore, the need to differentiate one group from another, and so the need for a boundary to be drawn, may vary. And, because groups are not homogeneous but instead consist of individuals who may possess dissimilar characteristics (Cohen, 1998 :11), it is possible for an individual to belong in one context, yet not belong in another. It is because of this ambiguity of membership that boundaries of identities are so interesting and productive to study.

Barth focused on boundaries between groups and "not the cultural stuff that (they) contain" (1970: 15) because by focusing on the boundaries, relationships and interactions between groups are made clearer. If a boundary is formed, this is the point at which differences and criteria for inclusion are most clearly articulated:

> If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion.
>
> (Barth, 1970: 15)

The necessity for criteria of inclusion and exclusion implies both the need for identity-making processes and also the existence of a relationship between the groups - the criteria of membership and how people decide who belongs to what identities are the issues that are raised. This represents a move away from looking at the "stuff" which makes up an identity, the shared recognisable cultural traits shared by each group (Barth, 1970:13). Instead, we concentrate on "self-ascription and ascription by others" (Barth, 1970: 13).

Although Barth was looking at boundaries specifically of ethnic groups, I believe that this analysis can be extended to all types of boundaries and interactions. For example, Mewett argues that Barth's neglect of other types of boundaries within distinctive ethnic groups means that he also neglects the dynamics which cause the boundary to be first established (Mewett, 1986: 73). This study examines exactly these types of interactions and the ways in which boundaries are both created and transversed.

This implies that the boundaries are flexible enough to allow for movement of people across them, and for some differences between group members, but also be rigid enough that the difference between member and outsider is clear and unambiguous to both parties (Barth, 1970: 15). Barth argues that in order for this to happen, all members must engage in a process of ascription of membership which is not based on overt similarities or differences. So:

> It makes no difference how dissimilar members may be in their overt behaviour - if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behaviour be interpreted as A's and not B's; in other words, they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's. The effects of this, as compared to other factors influencing actual behaviour, can then be made the object of investigation.
>
> (Barth,1970: 15)

This means that all identities are ambiguous, or rather that the membership of all groups is open to negotiation. As will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the Jesters are not accepted as being part of the rugby playing culture because of their gender, but can also not be accepted as being a part of Bordertown society because of their playing rugby. This marginalisation and difference is negated, however, in their similarity to other people in Bordertown in terms of their national identity, as seen in Chapters 6 and 7. What is under investigation, then, is how people define identities, how they are formed and how people negotiate membership. In order to do this, we concentrate on the ambiguity.

Identity and ambiguity

By looking at identity in ambiguous contexts, I move away from the assumption that identity functions as an unproblematic given for most people. Instead, I assume that identity is potentially uncertain and problematic, and examine what happens on the boundaries of identity. By doing this, I am building on a significant body of work which establishes identity first as something worth looking at, but also something which is best examined when in flux (Frankenberg, 1957; Barth, 1970; Mercer, 1990: 43; Anderson, 1996; O'Dowd and Wilson, 1996; Donnan and Wilson, 1999; Sweetman, 1999; Tate, 1999; Kiely, McCrone *et al.*, 2000). This work tends to demonstrate that by studying identity in such contexts, we are able to see more clearly the processes of identity formation and negotiation (Kiely, McCrone *et al.*, 2000: 1.1). The majority of these studies use the example of ambiguous national identity to examine identity formation. Others, such as Sweetman and Tate look at people who are marginalised because of their bodies, either because they are tattooed or because they subvert accepted gender norms regarding bodies.

It is no surprise that texts dealing with ambiguity should concentrate on these two topics. The understanding of identity as a result of a series of social interactions places much of the formation of identity onto the human body, its appearance, use and spatial location:

> The body is the first locus of intentionality, as pure presence to the world and openness upon its possibilities. The most primordial intentional act is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings. There is a world for a subject just insofar as the body as capacities by which it can approach, grasp, and appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions.
>
> (Young, 1990: 148)

The interaction of the body with the physical world is the way in which we experience life and society. In the case of gender identity, ambiguous uses of the body or an androgynous or transgressive physical appearance cross the boundaries of gender identities and render the identity of the individual problematic. In the case of national identity, where the body is or where the community is situated in which the body is located, determines whether they sit close to or further away from the national community. In such instances, the marginality

may refer to spatial distance, or to social distance which carries the implication of the body's origin, appearance, gender or sexuality.

This ambiguity means that the people involved must develop strategies to deal with their problematic social position. Most are comfortable with their ambiguity - they are often characterised either by their ability to step over the boundary into a new social space and imagination. In this sense, ambiguity may represent a source of significant social power and control. This can be seen in Bordertown in some players' ability to represent both England and Scotland, or to 'pass' as one or the other. National identity becomes a choice or performance, rather than an unchanging feature of their lives. This element of choice:

> has the potential to create a space for creative self-determination and agency: the opportunity to construct new identities, to experiment with multiple subject positions, and to cross social and economic boundaries that exclude or oppress.
>
> (Ginsberg, 1996: 16)

Ambiguity in identity therefore has the potential to create a space for people to choose their identity, and to be more flexible. As such, marginalisation or partial exclusion may be a source of considerable power and satisfaction. Evidence from Bordertown suggests that this may be true. Both the townspeople of Bordertown revel in their national ambiguity and the distinctiveness it gives them, as shown in Chapter 6, and the Jesters are also criticised for wanting to be seen as different, in Chapter 4, a signal that they are proud of their difference and want it to be acknowledged.

This sense of empowerment is particularly noticeable in reports of people, particularly women, who modify their bodies either through participation in activities such as body building, or through practices such as tattooing (Mansfield and McGinn, 1993 : 57 - 58; Tate, 1999; Sweetman, 1999: 68; DeMello 2000: 173). In engaging in such practices, these women create a different appearance of their bodies - one which may be interpreted as masculine because muscular or tattooed. In engaging in an ostentatiously 'male' activity, the women were also altering their bodies in a way which subverted the social/sexual gaze. These women reconstructed their bodies and in so doing, constructed an alternative identity and an alternative dialogue with society.

However, if we accept that identity is relative, entirely dependent on social context and circumstance, then it is obvious that the relative positions of power held by individual, groups and communities must impact on their ability to define who they are. As a result, ambiguity in identity may serve to undermine or reinforce an already marginalised and precarious position. This is illustrated in the studies of communities which live on the borders of national communities and identities (Frankenberg, 1957; Larsen, 1982; Anderson, 1996; O'Dowd and Corrigan, 1996; Donnan and Wilson, 1999; Kiely, McCrone *et al.*, 2000). Such studies use the experiences of people living with ambiguous national identities to illustrate how ambiguity may be developed and handled by both the people on the border, and by their co-nationals. Crucial to this is the understanding of how these people are perceived by the rest of their communities and what type of relationship they have with them and with their neighbouring communities. Are they heroic, the pioneers, living on the frontier, and so representing the furthest outreach of 'civilisation'? As such, they are markers of the limits of identity, and so carry in their traditions and way of life the myths and traditions about the "unity of the people, and sometimes myths about the 'natural' unity of a territory" (Anderson, 1996: 2). Or are they something else? Wilson and Donnan argue that border people "are comfortable with the notion that they are tied culturally to many other people in neighbouring states." (Wilson and Donnan, 1998: 4)

If this is the case, it may result in an uncomfortable relationship with their national community. Where do their allegiances lie - with their neighbours or with their co-nationals? This lack of clarity as to loyalty to the community can also be extended to asking whether individuals belong to another type of identity or community. Where the boundary of an identity is drawn becomes particularly important.

Where boundaries lie is a vital component of national identity - they represent the ways in which nations imagine themselves. Though they have specific roles in terms of the establishment of political sovereignty (Anderson, 1996: 189), they also represent the limits of a communal imagination: 'We belong here, they are elsewhere.' They are things to be fought over and defended:

> This world - 'our' world - is a place when nations have their official armies, police forces and executioners, where boundaries are rigorously drawn; and where citizens, and male citizens in particular, might expect to be called upon to kill and die in defence of the national border post.
>
> (Billig, 1997: 20)

With borders and boundaries being so important in the national consciousness, it is little wonder that those people living on the borders between nations are looked upon with some suspicion.

In such cases, the inhabitants are often assigned an identity by virtue of location, history or ancestry. These identities are then a matter of debate. Given the intense relationship between national identity and territory, the physical location of such people results in difficulty.

How do these people who live on the edge deal with the uncertainty? If one looks at the nature of boundaries, and in particular their role as signifiers of belonging or exclusion, one can see what actually defines 'us' and 'them'. This is conceived in a spatial sense (both physical and social). 'We' are here, the 'others' are there (Paasi, 1996: 13). Yet for the people on the boundary, the others are here as well. They inhabit the same social space, sharing characteristics and similarities. In some ways, we and they are one and the same, sharing one identity. How is it possible to reconcile the two memberships?

The potential for flexibility, choice and redefinition therefore lies in the specific social context the individuals and groups find themselves in. I will argue that one of the most important ways these people deal with such ambiguity is through the development and maintenance of a strong community of 'border-dwellers'. In the example of Bordertown, this takes place through the development of a strong local identity. For the women rugby players, it is expressed through the maintenance of a rigid team 'identity' which is based around the performance of a highly heterosexual, and therefore feminine, 'face'. This argument is based on Barth's argument regarding the degrees of similarity and dissimilarity in a group (Barth, 1970: 15). Those who are marginalised in terms of an identity experience this because of their perceived dissimilarity to others in their group. Because of this, they have a great deal in common with other members of the marginalised group, and are able to draw on these similarities to develop a strong identity of their own.

The empowerment described above is not something I quibble with. However, I do feel that such analyses simplify the way that things actually work and how people actually experience their identities. The social dimension of identity, outlined above, and the need for groups to both differentiate and assimilate seems to be entirely ignored, particularly if we consider how one group or individual may have, does have, multiple identities, all of which are intersecting and impacting on each other. The Jesters provide a prime example of this. Caught on two fronts of ambiguity - those of gender and nationality - they are forced to play one off against another, and to use their strategies of national identity management to deflect attention from their gender identity.

The context of sport

Although the role of sport, and particularly rugby, in the performance of identity is an important part of this work, sport is not its main focus. As a result of this, much of the literature surrounding the sociology of sport has not informed this work. The reasons for this stem from the fact that sport is often made the focus of such studies, rather than being used as a context to study other things. This can result in a neglect of some of the theoretical underpinnings of some of the claims made, which results in work which is occasionally superficial or self-referential. This is not to claim, however, that some very good work has not been done using sport as a way of studying identity. For example, in the field of gender studies, theory and empirical research are closely combined. However, much other work, for example on national identity and sport, relies on only a superficial examination of theory and therefore an incomplete understanding of the relationship between sport and the national community. In addition to this, there is a distinct lack of material which examines the role of sport in local communities, and what little there is, is normally considered to be irrelevant to the 'larger' or 'more important' topic of national identity. Rather than dwell on such problems, this section explores what contribution sport as a context can make to our understanding of identity, before turning to the specific examples of gender and national identity.

I argued above that identity can be understood as a performance. In order for this analogy to hold, it is necessary to see identity as a social interaction which involves an audience and actors. These roles are reversed or played simultaneously throughout the interplay between individuals. The interaction can take place on an intimate level, individual to individual or

within small groups, or on a larger scale, when big groups of people such as societies or national communities, communicate with one another.

The ways in which these groups communicate are based around the possession of a common language of signs and symbols. In order for a community to grow larger than a number which can easily be known personally by an individual, there must be a shared symbol or concept of community (Hall, 1997c: 17). So the 'national community', for example, might be argued not to exist, except as a shared 'fictional object'. It cannot then be seen except through representation, through a shared understanding of meaning and concept.

This shared concept is based around the use of symbols of community which are flexible and open to differing interpretations:

> Symbols . . . do more than merely stand for or represent something else. . . They also allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning. . . . But their meanings are *not* shared in the same way. Each is mediated by the idiosyncratic experience of the individual.
>
> (Cohen, 1993: 14)

These symbols are diverse, and range from the use of national or local sports teams to represent communities, national symbols such as flags, anthems or costume, to the 'symbol' of attractive femininity or appropriate womanhood, symbolised through the characterisation of females on television or in the movies. Symbols are diverse, and include certain behaviours and rituals. However, the importance of them is that they are diverse and therefore open to a range of diverse interpretations, but they are also shared by all members of a putative community.

Symbols can be said to represent the community, if not actually create them. A crucial point here is what is meant by 'representation'. Hall defines it as being:

> the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer to* either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events.
>
> (Hall, 1997c: 17)

This connection between concept and meaning is at the heart of what goes on when we discuss representation. In order to develop a community, we must share symbols and interpret them in similar ways. These symbols are therefore representations of the concepts which we share as part of the same community. However, it is by no means clear that we do share meanings, rather that we share similar meanings because members of the same community tend to share the same 'language of signs' (Hall, 1997a: 1). A final point regarding representation is that whatever is seen to be 'representing' something is always open to interpretation or reinterpretation. Hall uses the example of a hysterical patient 'performing' or 'representing' her symptoms with her body to medical students (1997c: 53). However, her symptoms are explained or "re-presented" by the professor of the class. An obvious power relationship is at work here, with the patient being effectively made into a symbol of whatever the professor chooses.

Sports teams are one example of a shared symbol of a community. They can be re-presented in whichever way their audience chooses, and therefore are an example of a symbol which is flexible in its possible interpretations. Each of them is interpreted and experienced in different ways. The players themselves are not individuals, but are rather seen as a unit to which most members of the community can relate.

In addition to this, sport is a public and shared experience. It relies on the presence of an audience and interaction for it to have any meaning. The audience may be those actually watching the event, but could equally be those who are participating. Without this relationship, sport becomes simply a pastime, rather than a symbol or representation of anything (Wertz, 1985: 13). At the most basic level, sport gives people a public forum to express themselves and their communities. Therefore, the sports field is one of the places that differences are recognised, and boundaries are drawn. Crucial to sport is participation and interaction in a specifically competitive context (Sugden and Bairner, 1993: 7) - without the element of competition, sport as an activity is meaningless. It is, therefore, firmly related to issues of identity - the world, according to sport, is divided neatly into 'us' and 'them'. The boundary lines are drawn firmly around identity and there can be no grey areas.

So the question must be asked, what happens when sport is played in a context where identities are ambiguous, as occurs in Bordertown where national identity is problematised? And what if a participant's identity is made ambiguous through their activities, as with the

Jesters? Because of the importance accorded to sport in our society, these are not idle questions, but rather begin to explain why sport is an appropriate context in which to examine such issues.

Asking these questions also removes this analysis from the general run of sporting analysis. Using sport only as an interesting context removes the focus from the sporting event itself and instead concentrates on the social dynamics which influence the event. This makes the analysis more applicable to studies outside sport, avoiding one of the main criticisms which can be made about sports sociology.

My own experiences in studying sport tend to make me believe that people who study sport tend to be those most involved with it, making the examination and 'analysis' of sport a joy, almost an exercise in self-indulgence rather than an academic pursuit. In light of this fact, it is perhaps unsurprising that researchers of sport and society have been drawn towards examining what happens at the elite levels of sport. The difficulty with this is that the higher emotional, financial and skill levels of sport played at this level tend to elevate sport above the realm of sensible analysis - researchers may get 'carried away'. Added to this is the fact that a researcher's interest in studying sport may well be connected to a long standing personal interest in a team being translated into a more professional interest. The difficulty with this is that it becomes very hard to be critical. Sport may be elevated above the realm of sensible analysis. A particular example may be found when writing about football:

> Football loyalties are deeply ingrained, whether these are to the act of playing, the sociability of bonding with players, clubs and spectators, or to the moral codes presumed by the game. Thus, football centres upon an affirmation of faith, an element of identity, both personal and collective, that is never fully communicable in effectively rational terms.
>
> (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1997: 11)

Whilst all of the above may be true, it also places football identities above mere academe. This continues later, with the statement that:

> as a ritual, football should not be considered as a one-dimensional representation of something else, positioned in realities beyond its own relevant contexts. Football provides a connection to an authentic social reality in its own right.
>
> (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1997: 195)

Again, while I agree that in some senses football, and sport, should be considered as topics worthy of examination in their own right, in the end, it seems to be a bit of a dead-end street. Why study a topic which appears to be nothing more than self-indulgent navel-gazing?

This type of writing also tends to ignore earlier work which examines the relationship between emotions, excitement, sport and spectacle. Such analyses interpret sport both as a social context in its own right, but also linked to a wider society as a means of generating tension and excitement in an otherwise repetitive existence (Hargreaves, 1986: 2; Goodger and Goodger, 1989; Holt, 1989: 137). As such, although the emotions roused by the experience of sport may well defy rational description, the context of sport and the ways in which people are drawn to identify with particular sports teams are fully explicable, although to do so requires further theoretical exploration.

This results in sport being objectified and reduces its role to that of reflecting society. Walvin, one of the earliest writers about sport comments that:

> sports and recreations are among the most revealing mirrors of many societies, offering a distinctive insight into social patterns, cultural values and even economic conditions.
>
> (Walvin, 1975: 1)

Another example of this type of thinking is in the argument that sports are "vehicles of identity" (MacClancy, 1996: 2), that through participating in them, one is simply carried along by the identity inherent in the team or sport.

Rather, sport should be seen as being a context which causes specific social interactions and reactions. Sport represents things, and in representing them, causes reactions outside its immediate sphere. But it is also affected by things happening outside - ambiguities in society in general are also played out on the sports field. As seen with the Jesters, and the experiences of other women in sport, it is not a context which merely reflects society. Rather it is a context which is intimately related to society and which has the capacity to change existing social noms.

However, neglecting this social context and the relationship between sport and society makes the analysis of sport a purely self-indulgent exercise, which adds nothing to our

understanding of how sport functions in society, or the processes of identification which are associated with it. As a result of some of these criticisms, I have attempted to be careful about how I have used sport as a tool for analysis. I have tried to move away from the notion that sport is a mirror, or vehicle, and see it as a context where potentially interesting things happen. Although my analysis has been informed by sports sociology, I have also tried to use other theories to inform my analysis.

Identity, sport and performance - the example of gender

I would now like to look specifically at the ways in which sport allows a closer examination of gender identity and identity performance. Of particular interest is the relationship between sport, the development and performance of gender norms, and the development of theories of gender. The embodied nature of gender identity and the physical nature of sport means that the analysis of one can be fruitfully linked to the study of the other (see Hargreaves, 1986; Cahn, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994; Caudwell, 1999). The experiences of women playing sport illustrate the ways in which gender identities are developed and perpetuated, and also indicate some of the ways in which they may be subverted.

It should not be assumed, however, that this subversion necessarily results in a redefinition of gender identities. In fact, although gender fluidity and flexibility are being increasingly accepted, because gender is read from the bodies of individuals, and the social understanding of bodies is along a binary model, gender as an identity is actually used as an essentialist identity, rather than one which is negotiable. This section therefore looks at the embodied nature of gender identities, before moving on to look at their relationship to sport. Ultimately it is argued that because of their embodiedness, gender identities are not as flexible socially as they may need to be to understand people's behaviours.

Gender is understood in this study to refer to "the sense an individual has of himself or herself as male or female, as belonging to one or other group." (Oakley, 1985: 159). It is therefore a social construction, like any other identity, but one which is based on an interpretation of biological capabilities and 'facts' about the human body. As such, gender works with the same dynamics as other identities discussed above, relying on individuals gaining acceptance by others in their group, and the maintenance of boundaries.

The difference with gender identity is that there has traditionally been great anxiety in Western society about gender ambiguity. Because of the structure of modern society, gender roles are established along a specifically binary model with men doing one thing and women another. The concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' make sense only used in relation to the other and with an understanding of the body's place in their formation (Klein, 1993: 17; Bonvillain, 1995: 187; Connell, 1995: 44; Kvande, 1999: 307). With social structures in place which formalise the roles of men and women, locking them into a specific power sturcture, and with the linking of gender to biological factors rather than social ones, it is easy to see how gender comes to be understood as something which should be unchanging. Challenges to gender identities also signal challenges to the social order and this causes anxiety - people are unsure how to handle it. One of the most visible places this has happened, and somewhere which has direct relevance to the body, is in women's participation in sport.

A constant theme in the discourse surrounding women who play sport is the anxiety which surrounds the possible effects of playing sport on women's femininity. The link between physical development, sensuality, sexuality and gender is explicit, as is the desire to control women and maintain femininity as a relatively passive and powerless identity. This is related to the difficulty people have in dealing with gender ambiguity particularly in instances where women apparently supplant the masculine role.

The need to control women's bodies and women themselves is played out in two ways. First is the denial of a woman's ability to play a sport or play it well, because of the possible negative impact on her social status or upon her physical well-being. In fact, both are linked, a woman's desirability and social standing is intrinsically linked to her physical attractiveness. Second is the continual objectification of women and surveillance of their bodies.

Feminist analyses of sport have emphasised its role in the perpetuation of current gender roles in society. In particular, sport has been highlighted as a site wherein the glorification of masculine (i.e., muscular, active) bodies is translated into the practice of masculine exercise of social control:

> The most glorified sports in this society are those that emphasize physical domination and subjugation. In these

> sports, men's bodies, particularly as weapons of physical violence, become sites of power.
>
> (Kane and Disch, 1993: 347)

The focus on the physical results in the dichotomy of masculinity/femininity being reduced to notions of biological superiority/inferiority. Social power is reduced to biology (Klein, 1993: 223; Hargreaves, 1994: 28). Men are physically more powerful than women, and this is changed into social reality through avenues such as sport. Superior physical strength is then translated into a corresponding power imbalance between the masculine and feminine, men and women. In particular, it is done through the glorification of violent sports, such as rugby.

Masculinity and femininity may be easily, if simplistically, determined along the appearance and use of the body. Thus, a masculine body is active and muscular, shown to advantage through sport and a feminine body is inactive and used decoratively. This occurs through social practices which are specifically designed to develop bodies along these lines:

> The physical sense of maleness experienced by many men comes not just from the symbolic significance of the phallus, or even simply from the images of power frequently attached to the male body by popular culture. It also derives from the *transformation* of the body through social practices . . . This can happen in a variety of ways and incudes the greater encouragement boys usually receive in comparison with girls to engage in strenuous physical exercise and 'cults of physicality', such as football and weight training, which focus on the disciplined management of the body and the occupation of space. These differences tend to grow during adolescence when girls are encouraged by the media to focus more exclusively on the relatively passive decoration of their bodies (for example, through make-up and jewellery), while boys are meant to concentrate on the more active building up of their bodies.
>
> (Shilling, 1993: 110 - 111)

Femininity may be analysed as an aesthetic (Cahn, 1994: 224), implying stillness and beauty, something to be looked at and admired. For example, in her study of wind surfing subculture, Wheaton (2000) argues that, despite the apparent absence of 'macho' masculinity, it is assumed that the wind surfer will be male. Masculinity is taken to be a given. This means that women are reduced to the role of decorative, sexual objects (2000: 441). This does not leave much room for a feminine woman to participate in sport, with its attendant

movement and exertion. Sport may also encourage a woman to develop her body in ways which jar the aesthetic of femininity. This can be seen in the reactions of men to women playing rugby, which often centre on the apparent 'masculinisation' of their bodies or sexuality which accompanies the development of muscle.

This aesthetic is compared to the masculine activity and the idealisation of the masculine sporting body, and is often found wanting:

> The idealized male sporting body - strong, aggressive and muscular - has been a popular symbol of masculinity against which women, characterized as relatively powerless and inferior, have been measured.
>
> (Hargreaves, 1994: 145)

Society explicitly makes the link between physical presence/ capability, power and masculinity, and contrasts it with the relatively weak feminine body. This poses difficulties when women begin to play sports associated with men. Society must establish how to categorise these women who are female, but not feminine, and the women must deal with society's marginalisation of them (Klein, 1993: 190).

One early response to these problems were attempts to limit women's participation in such activities. For example, concern was raised about the impact of playing sport on a woman's ability to have children - it was feared that sport may damage a woman's reproductive organs (Cahn, 1994: 167). This particular view was held until the 1930s, and is sometimes brought up as an argument against women playing contact sports, but has generally been replaced with the view that due to her biology a woman is inherently limited in her sporting ability (Hargreaves, 1994: 28). This is shown through the continuing belittlement of women's sports and women's participation in sport. Though this is changing, and women are now 'allowed' to participate in almost all sports, residue can still be seen in such sports as tennis, in which women play three sets to the men's five, and in the resistance to women participating in such sports as boxing, and rugby and other football codes. Women simply should not or cannot play such sports. The fact that they do results in difficulties because if women can achieve the same results as men while competing on similar terms, the entire basis for current gender performances is undermined (Wheaton, 2000: 450).

Another response is the expressed concern over the developing 'masculinity' of women who are involved in sport. This is particularly related to concerns over the participants' sexuality and appearance:

> The impression of heterosexual 'failure' contained a further possibility as well: The amazonian athlete might not only be unattractive but unattracted to men - she might prefer women.
>
> (Cahn, 1994: 165)

This is a concern to most women playing sport, but is particularly important to the Jesters. Women playing sport constitutes a direct challenge to masculinity, which is expressed through concern about sexuality - women playing sport may no longer need or desire men, rendering them socially and sexually redundant. This concern might be read as a response to a threat to current gender norms, and as an opportunity for women to express alternative forms of sexuality and femininity. However, as I will argue in Chapter 5, the accusations regarding lesbianism may also be an assertion of continuing masculine dominance and the objectification of female bodies and sexuality.

In addition to the supposed masculinisation of their sexual desires, women who play sport are often criticised because of their 'masculine' appearance. Obviously, playing some sports results in the development of muscles and the performance of behaviours which are not considered 'ladylike'. Gender should " be readable at a glance" (Halberstam, 1998: 23), both in how a body appears as male or female, masculine or feminine, and how it is used. Gender is not only socially constructed but it informs the ways in which physical bodies are read and interpreted. As a result, ambiguity in appearance or behaviour causes anxiety because it forces a reinterpretation of the body.

For example, body building and weight training result in the development of muscle and a corresponding change in the body's appearance. For men, the excessive building of muscle results in the formation of a 'hyper-masculinity', whereas for the women, the development of muscle can symbolise a shift away from the feminine 'look' of the female body and move towards a more masculine interpretation of their bodies.

Part of the reason for this is the connection which is often made between 'muscularity' and 'masculinity' (Mansfield and McGinn, 1993: 49). The development of muscle becomes a

symbol for the masculinity of the bearer. In the instance of male body-builders, the level of development is extreme - these men appear over-developed, their bodies coming to be a parody of masculinity. Yet the 'philosophy' behind it is such that it taps into a sense of performing and embodying masculinity that most men relate to (Klein, 1993: 194 - 195). As a rule, even for men who are not involved in body building per se, weight training still reaffirms their masculinity. The boundaries of this identity are marked on the one side by bodybuilders, with their 'hyper-masculinity', and on the other by women and femininity, reaffirming the relational nature of gender identities.

The women appear to be empowered (figuratively and otherwise) by asserting control over their bodies and their emotions (Tate, 1999: 38), taking pleasure in pushing their bodies through pain, to train to the limit of their abilities. The power also lies in rebuilding their bodies in a disruption of the usual 'feminine' identity and an action which forces a re-evaluation of how they are seen:

> They defy the beauty model by being the objects of their own gaze, using as a judgement of worth their latent images of the body. They manage stigma and negate their negative physical capital by identifying with their own latent images so that muscles are seen as erotic and feminine. Further, as women with physical strength and muscularity, which are traditional symbols of male power, they have power actually and symbolically invested in their bodies . . . Through these bodily practices women are transforming gendered habitus and thus creating identities for themselves which transgress the boundaries of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.
>
> (Tate, 1999: 52)

This is done to specific limits, as each woman has a sense of what she wants her body to look like. This aesthetic is determined by her sense of how much muscle results in 'masculinity' (Tate, 1999:41). This is affected by social norms and expectations of how developed a woman's body is 'allowed' to get. The 'gaze of the Other' is constantly referred to, if only obliquely, throughout narratives of female body builders. It is expressed through the self-limitation they place on themselves in terms of the extent of their physical development. But there is also a sense in which their new bodies are an opportunity for the women to challenge society's gaze. This attitude is echoed in studies of women who are tattooed (Sweetman, 1999: 68; DeMello, 2000: 173). To an extent, the woman becomes the 'other' to herself, thus stepping outside the male gaze.

This implies the ability of individuals to redefine their gender by making it ambiguous, and crossing its boundaries. As a result, there is an implication of empowerment in such ambiguity. This is certainly true in some instances, as some are able to redefine how they are seen in terms of their gender. However, great uneasiness still exists and in many instances, ambiguity is the cause of anxiety rather than empowerment. This results in considerable backlash against individuals who are engaged in the blurring of gender lines, and the performance of 'acceptable' gender roles.

This is shown in the reactions to people who perform ambiguous gender roles, or those which are deemed to be the opposite of their 'real' identity. Examples of these may be found in male and female impersonators. In the instance of men who impersonate women, their characterisation usually is not convincing and their performance tends to reinforce stereotypical femininities. This is seen as being a form of entertainment but may also be read as a continuing control over women's identity. On the other hand the increasing numbers of male impersonators tend to play a more ironic role, actually taking on more masculine characteristics and becoming more convincingly male (Halberstam, 1998: 239). This implies that gender is a role, which can be acted by male or female and undercuts masculine control over the feminine, because it proves that masculinity is not the sole preserve of men but is a role which can be played by women. This devalues the masculine performance, particularly in arenas such as sport which are traditional strongholds of masculinity (Wheaton, 2000: 450; Naess, 2001: 127). As a result of this, women are subject to intense efforts to control their behaviour and their identities. As a result of these efforts, the women themselves may become anxious about their identities and make attempts to reduce or control the ambiguity themselves.

Outside the world of entertainment, the invocation of 'femininity' and assertions of what is 'feminine behaviour' to reduce the likelihood and success of women who attempt to challenge existing gender norms (Macdonald, 1995: 2; Kvande, 1999: 311). As a result of this, women who are seen to perform alternative gender norms than the 'feminine' are likely to encounter difficulties. In the context of Bordertown, the gender norms are particularly entrenched, which accounts for the rejection of ambiguity and the desire for 'normal' gender roles to be acted. This desire exists for both men and women. This is a subject which is returned to in Chapters 4 and 5. Because of the lack of flexibility inherent in the current

gender structure, opportunities for individuals to redefine themselves are limited. As gender is literally inscribed onto the body, and because it currently operates on a binary, and often oppositional model, it is difficult for individuals to escape their designated gender roles. It is difficult, therefore, to manage ambiguous gender identities.

Sport, community and representation

As we have seen, gender identities, because they are based on the interpretation of individual's physicality, are difficult to manage if they become problematised. Do place identities, such as national identity or community identity, operate in the same way? It would seem not, and it would also appear that as a result of this, sport operates in a different way. Instead of being a potential cause of ambiguity, sport is a way of overcoming it, as it is also a way for communities to imagine themselves and be represented to the rest of society. Membership of communities may be judged according to the support of one team or another, or team membership.

The concept of 'community' is commonly used when discussing a group of people which is larger than a family, but more intimate than a society. However, it implies more than this. It also implies a level of acceptance and a complex dynamic of inclusion and belonging and exclusion. Thus, a community may be defined more by what it is not, than by what it is. Gilligan's analysis of the relationships between the categories of 'insider', 'tourist' and 'outsider' in a Cornish village (1987) is helpful in making this point. He argues that the category of 'outsider' is used to describe those living within the community but who are from outside it. As a result they define what the community is not, rather than what it is (1987: 77). The term 'community' therefore applies more to the relationship which exists between a group of people, than to the size of the group itself. It is therefore connected to a sense of shared symbolism, narrative, customs and ways of understanding the world (Crow and Allan, 1994: xv).

Intrinsic to this is the level of an individual's involvement in the social networks which make up the community, including their participation in such things as gossip and knowledge about the community (Gluckman, 1963: 308; White, 1994: 76). In smaller communities, these networks operate through the use of personal contacts. However, in communities which are larger, such as national or regional communities, it is possible to create networks of shared knowledge and even gossip, through the use of symbols such as sport teams. As gossip

relies on the participants' knowledge of those being discussed, sport teams are able to be 'gossiped about' through the medium of the national media. In this sense, it is possible to use sports teams to represent the community because they are symbols which everyone shares and knows about (Hobsbawm, 1983: 288; Holt, 1989: 154 - 155; Duke and Crolley, 1996: 4). Similar mechanisms work for sport at each level. As a result, marginal communities can tie themselves into larger national ones through sport. Sport at an international level is built on sport at a community or local level. People relate to the national team because they can sense that it is part of the same hierarchy as their own local team. Sport enables contact to be made between disparate communities, and for local communities to affirm and prove themselves.

Frankenberg's analysis of football in a Welsh border village provides an excellent example of the ways in which sport forges contacts between communities:

> Pentrediwaith's football club provides participation in this national game for both spectators and players. The spectators keep their eye in for North Wales Coast matches and the Welsh Amateur Cup, for Third Division (North) League matches and cup-ties and for Internationals and the First Division farther afield. To have a village team, especially when composed of local lads, fosters the fanatical partisanship which gives savour even to professional League football in the towns and gives Pentre football an intense importance in the village. The honour of the village and its place in the outside world are at stake in each game and in the day-to-day conduct of the club.
>
> (Frankenberg, 1957: 102)

We can see here the multi-layered nature of the role of the football team in representing their village. By participating in a sport which is played all over Wales, the team pulls their village into a web of contacts created by the game. Though the team itself does not necessarily play at a particularly high level, by watching the matches and playing, both participants and spectators are, by proxy, participating in the game at all other levels. They are able to watch other matches with a degree of interest precisely because of their interest in the game at a local level. Local rivals may be playing at a higher level. And because of the ties fostered between communities, a sense of a more regional identity may be created, feeding in turn to an interest in higher levels of the game, finally reaching first division and international level. In this way, interest in and knowledge about other communities and identities is created and fostered through sport. This seems to work rather like an onion, as

each subsequent community identity - village, local, regional and national - is added to the core identity: supporting Pentre's football team. An additional level is, of course, that the football team itself *is* the village for the duration of the match and beyond. Their performance, on and off the field, reflects the village, and so an intense interest is taken in the goings-on of the club. The players themselves are subjected to scrutiny and criticism, even from those who do not know them. They are not individuals - they are the village.

Another example of local sports and representation is found in wrestling. Hill (1999) argues that it was common for villages to have their own wrestling champions, who would 'defend' the village:

> As one informant told me in Macedonia, if two villages had a dispute then it might be settled by a match between their respective champions; needless to say honour was at stake as well as the material outcome of the dispute.
>
> (1999: 109)

The defence therefore took on both a symbolic and an actual reality. Obviously the pride of the village was at stake, but this happened at normal wrestling matches. What is interesting here is the material circumstances mentioned: sport was a recognised way of settling a dispute, possibly replacing tribal or inter-village violence, it took on a ritualised form, but one which had very real consequences in terms of settling the debate. As such, relationships and disputes between communities were settled through wrestling, but each village was tied into a web of relationships understood and mediated through shared symbols such as the sporting contest.

This web of relationships, communication and shared meaning can also be extended to the national community - a fact noted by many who have studied sport and society (Espy, 1979; Holt, 1989; Bairner, 1994; Duke and Crolley, 1996; Cronin and Mayall, 1998; Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1999; Johnes, 2000 to give a brief sample). A difficulty with many of these studies is that although the link between community and sport is made, how this link works and how identity itself works are often not used to inform the analysis. Theory, rather, is tacked on at the beginning and the end, but not used throughout the work. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to see what happens beyond the statement that 'sports teams represent the national community.' In fact, it is possible to identify two main ways in which this works, which are strongly linked to the theories of identification and community outlined above. First, sports teams represent the national community by becoming a symbol of it, in

the same way as they operate for the local community. They tie the nation together because they are known to everyone and therefore belong to everyone. Second, because they are known to everyone, they offer a chance to marginalised groups to become part of the community. As will be shown in Chapter 7, this can be seen happening in Bordertown as the Jesters use their shared national ambiguity to overcome their ambiguous gender identity.

As a symbol of a national community, sports teams are particularly effective. Hobsbawm stated that "(t)he imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people." (Hobsbawm, 1993: 143) The nation and national community inhabit the bodies of the athletes who *become* the nation for the period of the match or event. Although this is most often analysed in terms of elite or national teams, it is also true of athletes such as those in Bordertown, who play in nationally ambiguous areas, or who come from ambiguous communities. Though these teams themselves may define themselves in a specific local and national way, possibly as a mixed identity, or as sharing the identity of the nation in which they are playing, opposing teams may feel differently, assigning them the identity of 'the Other' for the duration of the match and beyond. The interactions between individuals on the sports field stretch beyond the dynamics of the game taking place, and reflect debates and negotiations ongoing in the wider communities.

I argue that this occurs at all levels, and that the ways national and local identity are developed are essentially the same. However, when writing about national sports teams, there is a tendency to elevate them beyond local sports teams, leading to implicit assumptions about the power of national sports teams compared to local teams and rivalries. Cronin writes that:

> notions of identity are formed at many different levels, and in sport one of the most important has been the creation of nation states competing against each other in an 'us and them' contest. This allows national prestige to be played out on the sports field with all the supporters of that nation investing their identity in the fortunes of their representatives. A victory against another nation produces a sense of elation, national pride and unites the individual behind the team and the accompanying symbolism of the national strip, the flag and the anthem. Solely domestic competition . . . does not allow for this as all emotional attachments are invested in communal opposition or support, for or against the town or region rather than the

> unifying ideal of the nation . . . It is through successful comparison with the 'other' that a celebratory notion of 'ourselves' emerges. Although a culture or nation may have a sport which exists in splendid domestic isolation which is central to a definition of 'us', identity and notions of it, have always, either militarily or through sport, measured us against them.
>
> (Cronin, 1999: 127)

Cronin is arguing that if we are to analyse sport as it functions within identity generally, and national identity specifically, we must analyse it from an elite or international level, rather than a local level. However, I do not think that this is necessarily the case. Personal experience of playing sport at a local level in Britain has shown to me the depth of passion and identification which is born of playing for a town or community against the nearest rival. This passion is frequently mystifying for outsiders, but is very real for the participants in the sport. In addition to this, I will argue that national teams are in no way as clear cut or unambiguous as they seem, and in fact may be the source of division and anxiety themselves. There seems, therefore, to be room for an examination of sport at a local level as well as a national one.

Because of this type of evidence, it becomes difficult to defend the notion that sport matters only if it is played at high levels. This seems to contradict Cronin's assertion that national teams do not perform the same function as local ones (Cronin 1999 : 50). A more accurate view would be to recognise that the local and national interact with each other, and that one medium through which this happens is sport. This is shown through studies such as Frankenberg (1957) and Hill (1999).

One of the important issues about national identity and sport, but one which is not often discussed, is that although sports teams do function as symbols of communities, it might be that they are symbols only for specific parts of them. As a result, the relationship between symbol and symbolised is not simple.

For example, sport developed as a mass spectacle and a representation of community in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, a period in which the state became prominent in the lives of its citizens (Hobsbawm, 1983: 264) and when a growth in popular participation in the state became common among the working classes (Hobsbawm, 1983: 265). It was also during this period that football became professional and recognisable in its modern day

form (Hobsbawm, 1983: 288). This is important because football remained a working class phenomenon and with the growth of mass social movements and the shift in politics and identification from a local and regional level, football as a mass spectacle played an important role, giving men across several regions something in common to discuss. As such, the growth of football, and other sports, as a popular phenomenon must be considered in the context of political changes, and the need to develop and maintain ways of controlling and channeling the masses towards a new political structure.

In this sense, sport can be argued to represent a community by the state, as a means of social control (Hargreaves, 1986: 2; Holt, 1989: 137 - 138). This is also reflected in early measures to control or ban sports such as football because of the opportunities they gave for the assembly of young healthy men in a society which lacked a strong police force (Walvin, 1975: 16). As such, it might be argued that specific sports were encouraged with the view to channeling potentially socially disruptive energies towards a channel which is easily controlled. This ties in with the discussions of the relationship between sport and excitement above.

However, having said this, it must also be said that this holds true mainly for local teams. Although sport is a medium which allows for communication across a wide range of people, it is also true that the communication and symbolism operate according to the class of the witness. For instance, although football was primarily a working class pastime, yet it was the middle classes who took the national football team as a symbol of their nation

Hobsbawm isolates three main functions of sport in this period:

> First, the last three decades of the nineteenth century mark a decisive transformation in the spread of old, the invention of new, and the institutionalization of most sports on a national and even an international scale. Second, this institutionalization provided. . . a public show-case for sport. . . Third, it provided a mechanism for bringing together persons of an equivalent social status otherwise lacking organic social or economic links, and perhaps above all providing a new role for bourgeois *women*.
>
> (Hobsbawm, 1983: 298-299)

One aspect which is important to note here is in the third point, where Hobsbawm indicates the class element of this equation. During this period, when sport did become

institutionalised and a popular spectacle, its political and social benefits became obvious. However, it was usually only within the *middle class* that sport as a representation of nation, as expressed through international matches, was accepted. Though sport provided links between members of the nation by means of professional sports such as football, competition at an international level interested, usually, only the middle class viewer.

This seems to indicate that working class and middle class spectators and participants in sport had different expectations and needs for sport. It also indicates that we cannot assume that the 'imagined community' spoken about so confidently, can be easily imagined as the team of eleven or fifteen. This state of affairs seems to have continued into the inter-war period, though by this time international sport was more established:

> as a mass spectacle . . . the unending succession of gladiatorial contests between persons and teams symbolizing state-nations . . . Until then such occasions as the Olympic Games and international football matches had interested chiefly a middle-class public . . . and international matches had actually been established with the object of integrating the national components of multi-national states.
> (Hobsbawm, 1993: 142)

Though this indicates that international events had become more universally watched and more accepted as a national phenomenon, appealing across the population rather than simply to one specific class, I do not think that this can be so easily assumed. Working class interest in professional football can be linked to a desire to forge bonds between communities within the national community, on a local and regional level. The interest is based, therefore, on differences within the nation, for example, in England, the split between North and South (Holt, 1989: 272). Though evidently national identity and nationalism may have been transmitted to the working class through the medium of football (Duke and Crolley, 1996: 4), it would still appear that the national team seems to attract mostly support from the middle classes. Though without support from the more affluent sections of society, football could not have reached the levels of professionalism which it has (Russell, 1997: 74), it feels as if this happened as a way of maintaining control over the bulk of the population, and introducing them into the political and social framework in a way which could be controlled and channeled appropriately.

The middle class interest in the international aspects of sport links into the desire for unity within the national community and so tends to focus on similarities rather than differences. It also implies that any analysis of sport and its relationship with a national community must take into account issues such as class and the differing class interests within a society. This begins to indicate why sports sociologists have tended to focus on sport at the elite level, as it is only at this level that we are able to discuss the relationship between sport and the unity of the nation. Taking it down a level simply means examining the fragmentation of national identity into various, and often competing, regional and local identities.

Another important role of sport in a society is its role as a force for the expression of alternative identities within a society, and a means for marginalised communities to gain acceptance. For example, the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland has specifically political aims, and is a symbol of the Irish nation and a rejection of the division of that island:

> The Association is a National Organisation which has as its basic aims, the strengthening of the National Identity in a 32 county Ireland through the preservation and promotion of Gaelic Games and pastimes. The Association further seeks to achieve its objectives through the active support of Irish Culture, with a constant emphasis on the importance of the preservation of the Irish language and its greater use in the life of the Nation; and in the development of a community spirit, to foster an awareness and love of the national ideals in the people of Ireland.
>
> (Sugden and Bairner, 1993: 28)

This organisation was established for a specifically nationalist reason, in reaction to the suppression of Irish culture during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the British. To this end, it promoted a policy of separation from British political and economic organisations, most potently symbolised, perhaps, by the police rule, which effectively banned members of the security forces from membership in the G.A.A. (Sugden and Bairner, 1993: 28). Though this rule has since been revoked, it does serve to indicate the ethos of the G.A.A..

In Northern Ireland, the nationalism associated with the G.A.A. is still taken very seriously. Participation in the sports of Gaelic football and hurling and membership of the G.A.A. was, and still is, a statement of national and political identity (Sugden and Bairner, 1993: 35).

Specific examples are not difficult to come by - the hurley, the stick used in hurling, is a particularly strong symbol of Irish republicanism (Maolfabhail, 1973: 53). The symbolism of the G.A.A. and the games played has definitely not been lost on the British government and it has coloured all subsequent dealings with the association. As a specifically nationalist organisation, it is one of the best examples of the ways in which sport is used to represent a particular community and identity. It is also an example of the ways in which sport may be used to resist a particular community identity.

In order for either of these functions to operate, it is necessary for a community to select its representatives. These should be individuals who are acceptable to many people within the community, who are uncontroversially members. As the team represents something larger than the sum of its individual parts, certain restrictions are placed on the players or athletes themselves. Their behaviour is no longer judged on an individual basis, but rather on how it will reflect on the community as a whole, they must be doubly careful as to what they do and how. The players must conform to certain expectations regarding behaviour, dress and manner, and appearance.

This is potentially problematic for people who come from marginalised communities or who possess ambiguous identities. One example comes from those who live on the borders of national identities, where their national loyalties may be seen as suspect by their co-nationals. Another example is in groups such as women. In Bordertown, we see a combination of the two.

The use of sport by such groups has been well documented, particularly in relation to immigrant groups. Such groups use sport as a way of asserting their presence in the new society, and as a means of gaining respect (Mosely, 1997: 161; Nelson, 1998: 67). However, this can only work if the individuals or groups involved are sufficiently integrated into the dominant culture that it is able to accept their difference.

An interesting example comes from Australia, in the behaviour of Australian runner Cathy Freeman at the 1994 Commonwealth Games, and the reactions of team officials. Freeman is one of the most successful female runners Australia has produced, and at this particular Games, won both the 200 and 400 metres. Upon winning the 400 metres, securing her second victory, she picked up the flag of the Koori people, the symbol of indigenous

Australia, and ran a lap with it, picking up the Australian flag on the way. It was a symbol of her recognition of both her ethnicity and also her nationality, uniting Aboriginal Australia and Australian nationality, two identities which rest very uneasily together. Reaction from Australian officials was swift. Arthur Tunstall, secretary to the Commonwealth Games Committee, claimed that further displays of 'unofficial' flags would lead to Freeman's suspension. Kell (2000) argues that:

> Tunstall's action and comments were directed at silencing any future expression of Aboriginality that Freeman might decide to make. In his opinion this was the Australian team competing under the Australian flag. Freeman had been fortunate to be chosen to represent Australia; she had not been chosen to represent Aboriginal Australia. As such her Aboriginality must remain dormant during the course of the Games.
>
> (2000: 48)

The split over who is acceptable to represent the nation becomes obvious here. Australia has taken pride in its ability to accept people from all over the world. However, the racism inherent in Australian national identity becomes obvious. Aboriginal people are accepted as Australians only as long as they do not display pride in their Aboriginality. Freeman was effectively left a choice between two identities: her Aboriginality or her 'Australianness'. Though she showed, by her actions, that she saw no direct contradiction between the two, it is obvious that others did. Her choice was reduced to either accepting the 'Australian' national identity, and being seen to represent all of Australian society, or being reduced to representing Aboriginal Australia only. If choosing the latter, she stood to lose all of the medals won under the Australian flag. The acceptable face of the Australian community, it seems, does not permit a non-white face to be seen or a non-white identity to be expressed.

In the above instance, Freeman's identities were conflicting as the established interpretation of Australian national identity did not allow for flexibility. In some ways this mirrors the situation of other marginalised people, particularly those who may be eligible to claim, as Freeman did, membership to two essentially conflicting identities.

Sport teams represent not only the 'where', but also the 'what' - ideas and ideals, the appropriate uses and appearances of bodies are also contested on the sports field, through the bodies of the participants. However, as can be seen from the above discussion, there is

more scope for flexibility in terms of national or place identity than there is for gender identity. The performance of 'place' identity rests upon the ability of individuals to become appropriate symbols of the community. As a result, if they are accepted as members of the community, they are afforded more scope in their performance. However, as the performance of gender identity is bound up in social structures and power relations, there is little or no scope for ambiguity. Therefore, it is easier to handle an ambiguous national identity through sport than it is a problematic gender one.

Rugby and representing communities

Having discussed the performance of gender and national identity through sport, I am now going to turn my attention to the specific context of rugby. As a sport, it is an interesting context for both gender performance and the representation of a specific community, and so forms an appropriate context to examine the handling of such identities.

Rugby developed as an extension of the game of ' folk-football', reports of which date back to England from the fourteenth century (Russell, 1997: 5). These games were without regulation and resulted, unsurprisingly, in social disturbance and injury (Dunning, 1999: 53). It was not until the nineteenth century when more regularised versions of these games began to be developed, notably in public and grammar schools. The first written copy of the rules of rugby dates from 1845 and was produced by the pupils of Rugby (Dunning, 1999: 62), although this was by no means the only form of 'rugby' in existence. The main purpose of these rules was to:

> ensure stricter control over the use of physical force in the game. To this end, the rules placed restrictions over the practice of hacking (kicking to the shins) and sought to prohibit altogether the use of what were called 'navvies'. These were iron-tipped boots, sometimes with projecting nails, and had formed a violent part of the game at Rugby and some other public schools.
>
> (Dunning, 1999: 63)

It is perhaps interesting that the practice of 'hacking' as such has been altered in modern rugby to legitimate practices such as raking, and that the modern rugby boots worn especially by forwards, although not iron-tipped, are hard tipped to protect the wearer from stamping, and all rugby boots must have metal studs in the bottom.

The first football union was set up in 1863, when members of the different public schools met to try to establish a uniform game. This association lasted until 1871, when people preferring the style of game played at Rugby which involved handling the ball set up the Rugby Football Union (Dunning, 1999: 63). With such a beginning, rugby was established as a sport played by the middle and upper classes. This was true also in Scotland, whose public schools had been playing a version of the Rugby game since 1824 (Chandler, 1996: 27). Football, although it had similar beginnings, quickly spread to the working classes and by 1914, was the main winter sport played and watched across England and Scotland (Russell, 1997: 36). It is perhaps because of the dominance of football that this is the sport most analysed in relation to various British national identities.

This is somewhat surprising because rugby was developed and encouraged with the specific view of encouraging a 'British identity' among Britain's colonies, to develop a breed of soldiers for the Empire and to strengthen links between Britain and her dominions (Vincent, 1998: 124). The game was promoted as a way of establishing British values in a foreign land.

To a certain extent this was successful. For example, in South Africa, rugby became the sport favoured by whites of all classes, whereas blacks and Asians tended to concentrate on football (Morrell, 1996: 91). Morrell argues that rugby became dominant initially as a way of whites establishing a familiar social system, based on the British class system and strict notions of difference and segregation both between classes and races (Morrell, 1996: 91). As time went on, class stratification became less important than racial segregation. This is a marked contrast to New Zealand where, although the game was initially favoured only by whites and the elite, the Maori communities quickly became involved. The first games of rugby occurred in the early 1870s, and a Maori player is listed in a regional side in 1876 (Phillips, 1996: 73). Again, we can see the importance of sport in establishing and encouraging a community spirit at a time when national identity was at a low ebb. This in turn fed into a national identity, though not an imperial one.

1905 saw the adoption of rugby as a specific symbol of national pride and community when Wales became the only home nation team to beat the touring New Zealand team, at this time the best team in the world (Johnes, 2000: 95). This gave all of the people in Wales a symbol to relate to where other symbols of Welshness such as the language, and religion failed (Johnes, 2000: 96). The success of the national sports team is a way of measuring the success and

prestige of the nation which produced it (Cronin, 1999: 51). Wales, due to this early success, adopted rugby as a means of representing itself to the rest of the world. As a result of this, people are interested in playing rugby, and success has tended to follow. A similar process can be seen in the colonies of New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. In contrast, the rest of the United Kingdom has tended to look elsewhere for national representation, and crowds at international rugby matches tend to be dominated by the middle class. There are obvious exceptions, such as the area of the Scottish Borders, and in some parts of northern England. However, rugby has never had the mass appeal in Britain that football has. As a result, its representational nature is also different - people as a whole do not tend to use rugby teams as their representatives. Rather, football teams tend to be used.

As well as its particular class nature, rugby has also been the focus for the development of a specific type of masculinity. In the colonies, rugby became a test of manhood and nationhood, a process accelerated by early successes (Maclean, 2000: 257). Rugby was also developed as a means of developing strong and healthy young men with the correct self-sacrificing team spirit who would be prepared to defend the Empire (Chandler, 1996: 24). This develops a sense of young men as being the defenders of a community or nation, which excludes women. Women are therefore marginalised, and the masculine sub-culture of rugby is further discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Conclusion

The above is a brief outline of the themes and perspectives used in the rest of this work. Identity is established as a social, relational concept and sport as a context where ambiguity may be fully explored. Issues of representation have been introduced, with some potential problems highlighted. The concept of power and its importance in the development and expression of identity has also been introduced.

In establishing identity as relational, the importance of boundaries and issues of inclusion and exclusion are highlighted. The remainder of this work deals with such issues on a continuous basis. The importance of performance, and as a result representation is also established, and sport is introduced as the context for such work. Particularly important are the issues of the performance of gender and national identity.

Gender identity is introduced as being an identity which operates on a binary and often oppositional model. If one is masculine, one cannot simultaneously be feminine. One identity cancels the other. This is done through a social focus and anxiety surrounding the physical appearance and performance of gender, a constant surveillance of the body. Because of this surveillance, sport provides an ideal setting for examining gender identity. What has been established is that although the model of gender is inflexible, individuals are still able to develop or alter their physical appearance such that they are able to subvert existing gender norms. This, however, causes great social anxiety, particularly concentrated on women who seek to perform more 'masculine' roles. This results in intense pressure on those women to conform. Ultimately, it seems that there is some latitude available, but that gender ambiguity is difficult to manage. This is particularly true in the context of Bordertown.

National identity, on the other hand, is introduced as somewhat more flexible. This is partly because the development of national identity relies upon the development of a unifying system of meaning which covers disparate local communities. Again, in Bordertown, we can see this happening as local identity is used to mediate national identity. In addition to this, sport can be used to integrate a national community, allowing potentially marginalised people to become accepted as part of the larger community. Sport, therefore, operates as a means of social inclusion, as opposed to the case of gender where it is potentially the cause of exclusion. As a result of this, problematic national identities are easier to manage.

Rugby is then introduced as the context in which these issues will be further examined. In Britain, it is linked to a particular type of national identity, associated with the development and defence of Empire. It is also associated with a particular type of masculinity. This makes its role in terms of community representation somewhat different to other sports. Associated with public schools and the middle classes it has not tended to gain the popular appeal of sports such as football in places other than Wales, the Scottish Borders or the north of England. As a result of this, it tends to offer an interesting context in terms of gender and national identity. As a sport it offers a community the opportunity to express their own identity, and establish their national identity. On the other hand, it also marginalises some participants and does not seem to offer them anything in terms of negotiating their gender identities. It is, therefore, an ideal context for examining ambiguous identities, particularly gender and national identity.

Chapter 2:
Methods

One of the main arguments in this research is that understanding ambiguous identities requires an appreciation of their social context and the relationships between different identities. It is also argued that the best way to understand identity is to see it as being a performance of some sort, governed by interactions between social actors. As a result of this, it was important to get behind what people actually said about their identities, and rather, see how their identities were actually performed, particularly in contexts that problematised their identities. This involved the use of ethnographic methods of research including participant-observation and interviewing. A combination of these meant that a comparison was able to be made between what people actually said about how they handled their identities and what they actually did. I decided, therefore, to join the team as a full member, despite having never played rugby before. Although the choice of this method of data collection was supported by literature on research design (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1997: 7; Robson, 1993: 148), and a fruitful method of data-collection, this method also caused difficulties, ethical as well as personal. This chapter gives an account of the methods used in detail, as well as discussing some of the problems which arose during the fieldwork.

The first section outlines my choice of the field and the group to be studied, and describes my initial entry into the field. This is followed by a description of the interviews carried out and some of the limitations which I experienced. These became increasingly evident when carrying out interviews later on with some of the men involved in the rugby club, as their discomfort with my identities as rugby player and researcher were articulated both verbally and physically. This dilemma is also discussed in the section on fieldnotes where practical problems (such as remembering to take notes while in the pub, on the field or worrying about losing notes) were combined with more ethical dilemmas revolving around what information could be legitimately used if told to me in confidence. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of issues of anonymity, confidentiality and the difficulties of gaining informed consent.

Entering the field

The choice of fieldwork site is obviously of paramount importance for the successful completion of research. This particular group, in this particular place was chosen for study for several reasons. It appeared that Bordertown was an interesting place sociologically. Work completed on border communities indicated strongly that identity was problematic and ambiguous in such places (Kulick and Willson, 1995). I wanted to see if this was also true in Bordertown. It seemed that the issue of how identity is negotiated in ambiguous situations would benefit from further examination, and that Bordertown was a good place to do this. I had also worked in Bordertown while completing my Masters thesis. Focused on the issues of football and identity, it had served the task of familiarising me with the town, and also allowed me to overcome the initial difficulties in comprehension experienced. The importance of this cannot be overstated as 'Bordertownian', the local slang, is spoken at speed, and, when combined with the accents of surrounding towns, presents a newcomer with a daunting task. Because of this early introduction, I found that the accent in Bordertown, whilst still occasionally incomprehensible (particularly when spoken at moments of high emotion during a rugby match) was generally intelligible.

I also knew from this previous work that Bordertown was a place that interested me personally. As a rural town, it represented a stark contrast to the Australian suburbs where I grew up. I was attracted to the relative smallness in size of the community, and the sense of being known and protected within the community. Although ambiguous identities could have been studied in an urban situation, the novelty of a rural community gave the fieldwork added interest.

Finally, it contained a group of people who particularly interested me. Bordertown has a women's rugby team, and so I knew that there existed a group of people who negotiated boundaries of their identities every day, by virtue not only of where they lived, but also in their choice of sport. As a result, there existed a group of people who had ambiguous identities, but which I also stood a reasonable chance of gaining access to. As a young, physically active woman, I felt it was likely that I would be able to join the team with relatively few problems, so gaining access to the social context I needed to comprehend.

Having located where I wanted to study identity, and also to have identified the group of people I wanted to look at, I then had to find them. A break of twelve months occurred

between the completion of my fieldwork for my Masters and the start of it for the PhD. I had not, at the time of my Masters, actually met any of the rugby team in Bordertown, and as I remained living in Edinburgh for the duration of both periods of fieldwork, the opportunity for meeting the players socially did not exist. My first task, therefore, was to find the club. My second task was to assess my chances of carrying out the research without joining the team. My third task was buying a pair of rugby boots.

Many accounts of fieldwork begin with a 'journey-tale', a story of the ethnographers' journey into the unknown (Amadiume, 1993; Barley, 1983; Bowen, 1954; Briggs, 1970b; Klein, 1993; Macintyre, 1993). These stories have an important role in moving the readers' imagination into another context, and letting the writer settle themselves back 'in the field'. I will simply say that my first foray into the rugby club did not inspire me with confidence. I managed to find the club, speak to the team captain and be invited along to training where I explained to the rest of the team why I was there. One girl turned her back and said that she refused to talk to me. This, I felt, did not bode well for the successful completion of the research. However, I was invited along to a match in Glasgow, as a 'substitute'. I would be kitted up, warmed up, then able to sit on the sidelines for the game. Afterwards, I would be able to go into the clubhouse and have a talk with the other players. This corresponded to my idea about how the fieldwork would work - I would observe and discuss rather than participate

My memory of my true entry into the field, and what I consider to be the start of the fieldwork, is dominated by two emotions. One, first and short-lived, is contentment. I was sitting in the sun, watching a game of sport which, though not familiar, was entertaining enough. There was the prospect of a drink after the game, and I could feel a faint sense of superiority that I was working on a Sunday. This fieldwork was going to be fun! The second, more vivid and long-lasting, is of sickening terror as I watched one of my team-mates being carried off the pitch after a collapsed scrum, and realising that I was going on to replace her:

> 'What position are you playing?'
> 'I don't know.'

Suddenly fieldwork didn't seem like so much fun. I remember thinking, as I lay in the mud and waited for a member of the opposing team to pick themselves off me, that one of the characteristics of qualitative fieldwork is 'immersion' in the field (Coffey, 1999: 30; Okely,

1992: 17). I wondered how 'immersed' I was supposed to become, and whether embedded, about six inches into the earth, would be a better term for my experience?

I was fortunate enough to both survive and enjoy my first game, and over the course of the fieldwork came to consider myself as fully a member of the team as any other player. Although physically and emotionally demanding, the experience was very positive. I developed close bonds with several team members which, although causing some strains as I struggled to reconcile the roles of researcher and friend, also provided much needed social and emotional support throughout the research. Although 'officially' my fieldwork site, my time spent in Bordertown with the Jesters felt less like work and more like relaxation than my time in Edinburgh.

Fieldwork and fieldnotes

Altogether I spent two seasons with the Jesters. The rhythm of the fieldwork was determined by the rugby season. Very little fieldwork could be done over summer, for example, as no games are played and the team is dispersed, making it difficult to contact players and spend time with them. One of the seasons was characterised by bad weather that limited the number of games and cut me off from Bordertown. That season was also limited because of a lack of players which also affected the games played. I do not think this was necessarily related to the research, but was more a result of the coincidence of games and work shifts which impacted on player availability. This again limited research opportunities.

In addition to these factors, the time I spent in the field was determined by the fact that I was studying amateur rugby players, who spent one night a week training, Saturday night in, then Sunday playing, Sunday night out with the team. The team itself did not tend to socialise together outwith these times. Rugby for these women took up only a small part of their lives. As my interest was in how they as group and individuals handled ambiguous identities that were caused by rugby, for me to spend more time with them would have been inappropriate and difficult to organise. My fieldwork was limited, then, to two nights a week and one day. Had I been living in Bordertown, the possibility of spending more time with team members may have arisen, giving me the opportunity to see the players in other contexts. However, as most of the players either did not work or live in Bordertown itself, and as my main interest was in the ways rugby affected their identity, I felt that my methods

were appropriate and provided sufficient data for my purposes. In addition to this, I found the role of distanced outsider useful both in analysing the data and avoiding being drawn into various feuds and arguments which were part of team life.

My aim, in starting the fieldwork was not to join the team, and my initial attendance and participation at training were undertaken more in the spirit of goodwill than anything else. I had hoped that it might be possible to do the research while simply observing. It became apparent, however, that by joining the team, richer data was available, and I was more quickly able to gain access and establish rapport. Indeed, one of the coaches told me this explicitly, claiming that the 'girls' were impressed by the way that I 'put my body on the line for them'. I was less pleased about this, as it seemed to commit me to playing a sport which, although I enjoyed, also held the promise of considerable physical discomfort at best, and the possibility of serious physical injury at worst.

As a research method, however, it was successful. It allowed me to enter the society of a group that would otherwise have been very suspicious of my motives. It also allowed me a greater understanding of some of the issues of gender which these players deal with. In choosing to look at a group with problematised gender identity, and by joining them in order to carry out the research, my own identity also became problematised. I cannot claim to wholly understand them from their point of view, yet I was able to gain a greater understanding of their situation because of my own experiences (Robson, 1993: 148; Van Maanen, 1991: 41).

Throughout the fieldwork, I kept fieldnotes. These notes were written longhand in a book which I kept in Edinburgh. On the occasions I was travelling with the team, I carried with me a small notebook. Notes were taken as soon after the events observed as was practical. It was impractical to take notes in front of the team, though they were all aware that I was doing so. I told them not to worry if I seemed to be disappearing off to the toilet rather more frequently than anyone else. I also told them not to be startled if they walked into the toilets and found me in there, scribbling furiously. This seemed to become something of a joke for most of the team, but one team member commented that it made her feel uncomfortable, and that it reminded her, and everyone else, that they were being watched. This in turn made it difficult for her to treat me as one of the team, which is how she usually considered me, and instead put me on the outside of the group. As a result of this, and of my own

feelings of discomfort, I found that my best strategy was to simply try to remember as much as possible, then write it all up later on. This made some of the fieldwork seem very underhand and furtive, but also allowed normal team dynamics to play out around me, and made me feel more comfortable. The notetaking tended to separate me from the others, making me feel isolated. Although still observing and writing up doing this later gave me some space to reflect, and I was still able to integrate with the others.

Doing this, I discovered, unsurprisingly, that the quality of the data I collected was proportionate to the amount of alcohol I consumed. In common with men's rugby, this team drank a great deal, with some forfeits involving the quick drinking of a combination of drinks. Though initially worried about this, I was comforted to know that other researchers seemed to have had similar difficulties:

> this was Scotland and since a participant-observation method was applied, the ethnographer's liver was tested in new and demanding ways.
>
> (Hognestad, 1997: 193)

If it looked like being an especially long night, I wrote the latter part of the night off. Although this may have cost me in terms of the data collected, it was important in terms of my ability to relate to the group and to become involved with them. After all, ethnography is about understanding a group through involvement in it (Robson, 1993: 148), and part of a successful entry into a rugby team is about consumption of alcohol. In addition to this, I feel that the alcohol helped me to relax and be myself. Certainly it allowed me to interact more freely with others, and they felt more relaxed around me after a few drinks. The importance of this was brought home to me one night when one of the women told me that when I first arrived, everyone was somewhat intimidated, and thought that I was quiet and reserved because I was Australian. The extent to which this reserve was due to a lack of confidence was never fully understood by the Jesters.

This system worked surprisingly well. I found that if I told myself not to worry about the notes, and to simply relax, I was able to remember more about what went on than I did if I was consciously `being a sociologist'. I seemed to develop a radar for relevant conversations and comments, but did not worry too much about whether I would remember it all. Once I gained some confidence in the field and with my situation in the team, I was also able to start controlling the amount I drank without feeling that I was being pressured. It became

known that I simply did not drink as much as the others, and when it became apparent that I could be as daft as anyone else drunk whilst remaining sober, there were no problems. As a result, the quality of my fieldnotes improved.

I found that, particularly at the beginning, it was helpful to divide my fieldnotes into two separate sections (for further discussion and explanations see Coffey, 1999: 119 - 120). One, which I usually wrote first, was about me, how I was feeling, and my personal reactions to what had happened or what I had seen. This acted as some sort of release valve as I tended to suppress reaction and comment whilst in public for fear of offending someone, or affecting a situation. I tried to be as much a part of the wallpaper as possible. This gave me no vent for my feelings, however, and before I began to divide the notes, they were all about me, rather than being about what was actually happening in terms of the project. However, once they were divided, things became much clearer. I was able to write myself out, which then allowed me to sit back, think about events external to myself and analyse them in a more dispassionate light. This system also helped me to look back at how I was reacting and feeling about things, and the more 'personal' field diary also contained some interesting information about social context which was missing from my other observations.

In retrospect, I think that my need to do this also stemmed from a confusion I was feeling in the field, particularly as I became closer to my respondents. As this happened, I felt more able to 'be myself', and the line which I tried carefully to preserve between 'me' and 'the researcher' became more and more blurred (Dubisch, 1995; Gill and Maclean, 2002). The confusion I felt was alleviated to a certain extent by my use of the 'diary' which was me speaking, and the 'fieldnotes', which represented the 'researcher.' As such, my fieldnotes represent a very personal record of feelings and experiences, as well as being a source of data.

It is significant that as my confidence grew, the nature of my fieldnotes changed. Rather than maintaining the separation, I began to blend the two sections. Brackenridge describes her use of a diary, rather than fieldnotes *per se* as being a record of how the research developed:

> I wrote using almost a stream-of-consciousness style since the ideas flowed so fast: the diary became long and intricate but now, when interrogated, shows clearly how issues like

> entering the field, overcoming inertia and building the trust of participants have been dealt with.
>
> (Brackenridge, 1997: 135)

I find it difficult to understand why I did not adopt a similar style from the beginning. I see now that I felt the fieldnotes should have the flavour of a public document that I was able to show supervisors and my informants. The personal section was something I wished to keep private. I now feel that a more free-flowing style of writing would have resulted in richer data, rather than the more self-consciously 'sociological' style of notes that typify the first season's fieldnotes:

> *Season 1*:
> It is a physical game and needs a lot of fitness. It's strange, though, because although people are close on the pitch (i.e., body space is invaded regularly), people aren't comfortable about looking at or being looked at other bodies. Nakedness isn't something they're comfortable with, which is a bit strange. Sexuality and the body seem to be confused.
>
> *Season 2:*
> [A player] had a baby boy on Sunday up at Scotston hospital. [An English player's] comment, when hearing that she wanted to be moved [home] was that obviously she was happy now to be moved to England once the baby had been born in Scotland! I've become the Australian rep for the team - talk of the Aussie League team pulling out of their tour let me in for some ribbing. Also fair game to criticise Kate (15 yrs old) for wearing her England top. Belinda commented that she was young and that she would learn.

What is striking when I look back at these two sections in that the first is entirely impersonal. It reads as if I had thought about what I wanted to say, and then said it in such a way that my own feelings could not be read. Yet I can remember feeling uncomfortable both about the nudity and the closeness which was part of rugby. This is not expressed at all. In contrast, the second reads far more as stream of consciousness, while still recording important information. The section moves from the birth of a baby, to my own nationality, and the importance of nationality in the intra-team banter.

The more open style would have been especially appropriate because often my personal experiences were highly relevant to the analysis. As a female rugby player, I experienced what it was like to flounder between identities, unsure of whether the way I was behaving

was appropriate, acceptable, or desirable. How could I remain 'hard' enough to be part of the team and respected as a player without becoming butch? My personal reflections upon this informed much of the research about gender, and the difficulty was how to include such reflections in the analysis.

Over the second season, I found that my fieldnotes became more integrated as my personal feelings and my observations were now in one account. As a result, they were also shorter. Part of the reason for this was that I was doing a lot of analysis and starting the writing up of the research in Edinburgh at the time. As a result, my focus was on re-evaluating existing data rather than gathering new information. The fact that I was writing constantly allowed me to record events as they happened and incorporate them immediately into the work. Another reason was my increasing unease about the research and whether the people involved fully understood what I was doing.

Informed Consent

As people became used to me, and got to know me, they began voluntarily telling me things about themselves, their opinions and their relationships which were both interesting and relevant to the research. The difficulty was that had I been told about them earlier in the research, I would undoubtedly have begun probing the issues deeper. However, I was also sure that I was being told these things precisely because I was considered a friend and someone who could be trusted with confidences. I was unsure of whether people still remembered what it was that I was doing, and in an effort to reconcile the conflicting identities of friend and researcher, effectively stopped writing and started simply remembering what was said. It was as if by not committing things to paper, I was not betraying anyone, yet was still doing my 'job'. The difficulty I then ran into was that I could no longer be sure that what I was remembering was accurate. In some instances I was able to return to conversations and confirm my memories, but in others, data was lost. I could not, and still cannot, see any way around this.

I feel that the reason for this is because of the split I experienced between what I felt should be public and what needed to be private. I had originally approached the fieldwork with the intention of being as open as possible about the work, to allow my participants full access and control. However, I found that this was impossible to do, partly because of how I felt about the work, and because of their lack of interest. But I also felt uneasy about the power

this apparently gave me. I was able to record what they said, apparently as friends, without their being given the opportunity to respond or to read what I wrote. Attempts to show them what I had written failed, as they made a game of guessing who my informants were, rather than actually reading what I had said about the team as a whole. I had wanted to research according to two central concepts of feminist methodology: " 'empowerment' and . . . the primacy of experience in social research." (Millen, 1997: 2.1). It felt to me that I was betraying my informants somehow, by keeping fieldnotes, disempowering them by recording actions. In addition, I felt that by writing them in the style I was most comfortable with, free-flowing and 'diary' style, my experiences although important and illuminating, were taking over the entire project. It was not until towards the end of the season, when I had begun to withdraw markedly from the field and had begun really writing up the data that I found myself able to write fieldnotes and analysis.

It is evident that what was at issue here was informed consent. Although I told the entire team (who then told everyone else) that I was researching the team, I am still not entirely convinced that they understood exactly what I was doing. I believe this is the case because at the time I was explaining to them what I wanted to do, I still had no way of understanding myself what was involved or how personal relationships and private conversations would become entangled in the public academic realm. Without this information myself, it was impossible for me to explain adequately to them what I was doing. Although the interviews (discussed below) represented a visible sign that some sort of research was going on, to what extent did the Jesters understand that research was on-going all the time? And if they did understand this, I doubt that they remembered it (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1997: 265) in part because of some things that I was told, and because there were few visible signs that I was doing anything unusual. As a result, some material I used in the thesis, I felt uneasy about, and some I omitted for fear of exploiting the confidence of my informants and friends.

The difficulty faced here is bound up in the power dynamics of the relationship I entered with my team. I wanted to allow them to direct the research, and had hoped that it would be more of a collaboration than a split between researcher and researched. This would have resulted in a far more equal relationship between myself and the team, moving away from a hierarchical research structure (Hammersley, 1995: 48), and allowing the participants to have a greater voice and larger share in the ownership of the research. As things stood, I suspect

that the power imbalance remained throughout the work but whereas I was cautious about my own status as a 'student' who had no idea about the 'real' world (in their view), I was also aware that in making some of my findings known, I held a powerful position. My informants were really not interested in taking up ownership of the research. Though periodically asking me how it was going, there was never any real effort to discuss why I was interested in certain issues, or in reading what I wrote, other than in trying to guess each other's identities in the pieces. This seemed to frustrate my best intentions, but in some ways represents a wider issue in methodology in terms of the extent to which it is possible to 'empower' research participants if they do not wish to be empowered:

> There is a tension between a desire to give women a 'voice' within the making of knowledge . . . and the difficulties which arise from a recognition that women are not uniformly downtrodden, and that the researcher's notion of power may not be helpful to the research participant.
>
> (Millen, 1997: 2.2)

This tension was exacerbated for me when I realised that the majority of my teammates did not share my feminist views. Therefore, though I feel that some of my insights into their situation may have given them an alternative perspective, and one that may have contributed to what I consider to be a more equal and more enjoyable life, I never felt fully comfortable about expressing these views. Ultimately I did not discuss any of my opinions about the relative power imbalance within the rugby club in explicitly feminist terms with any but some of the younger members of the team, and was also aware that such discussions may have done more harm than good. I was aware that for some, the mechanisms they used to deal with their lives were working for them, and that any efforts by me to undermine these could, in the short-term at least, actually make the situation worse (Millen, 1997: 2.3). And I wondered whether I, as a researcher, have a responsibility to also try to change people's lives for the better by being there? Panini recognises that the relationship between researcher and respondents is one which places the researcher under some sort of obligation to give something back, recognising "the urgent need to reciprocate the love and affection of local women by doing something to improve their lot." (Panini, 1991: 9)

I am aware that many of these women were happy as they were. However, I felt, and still feel, that some were leading lives which I considered unbearably constrained and limited, and know that some of them were deeply unhappy. I also felt under some obligation to give something back to these people. It is difficult to see how this might be achieved, particularly

as I interpret their situation as being directly related to their position as women and so feel that improvement of their lives must involve some acquaintance with feminism. This was not possible in Bordertown, where feminism was considered to be distasteful and irrelevant. Early mentions of feminism by myself were met with blank stares, and in general feminism was associated with lesbianism. For reasons discussed in detail in Chapter 5, this was not a desirable thing to be associated with, and I learnt to remain silent about such issues.

A further problem relating to this is that I believe that some of the data I have gathered has been interpreted in ways which my informants may not agree with, and so may result in a sense of trust betrayed among them. I believe my analysis to be valid and useful, despite the fact that my personality has impacted on the interpretation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1997: 223; Ladner, 1987: 76). However, I feel that in some ways reinterpreting their experiences in a feminist framework, particularly regarding gender and sexuality (Cahn, 1994; Halberstam, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Mansfield and Maguire, 1999), which I am more attracted to has resulted in a somewhat distorted picture of them. They will still recognise themselves. I just doubt that they will agree with everything I have said.

In terms of 'giving back' to my informants, the only role I was able to play was that of the disinterested outsider for problems they were having. People who asked for my opinions got them, but otherwise I was more circumspect, allowing people to come to me. In this sense, I think that some people, when they felt trapped in their lives, saw me as showing an alternative way of life. I was a young, single and unencumbered woman who was free to go where and do what she wanted. As a result, I may have been an example, particularly to younger women, that more options were open to them beyond Bordertown. For the same reasons, I suspect that I was also an irritant.

Key Informants

In research of this nature, key informants not only provide access to the sites, but also can provide much needed emotional support, and allow the researcher to situate themselves in the field. In some accounts, the researcher appears to be absorbed into a family or group, in some instances actually being 'adopted', and given age and gender appropriate roles (Briggs, 1970b: 20; Coffey, 1999: 45; Macintyre, 1993: 51). Other examples are as close friends, or even lovers. The exact form the relationship takes depends greatly on the situation of the

researcher and the desires of the informants. As such, the forms of the relationships are constantly under negotiation.

The identity of my key informants, and my relationship with them, changed over the course of the fieldwork as my and their involvement with the team altered. The first people I struck up a close relationship with were one of the coaches and his wife. Not only did they feed and house me during my visits there, they were both also crucial in providing me with background knowledge about the people I met, issues which might be raised and giving me a passport into the social life of the club and beyond. Despite the fact that people began to get to know me when I trained and played, it was not until I began to go out with the coach into Bordertown that I began to really get to know people. On these nights out, I met players on the team in a context that was not rugby related and so began to understand how people in the team knew each other, who socialized with who, and where they all fit into Bordertown as a larger society. I was also able to meet more than simply the women's team, though most of the people I met were related to rugby in one sense or another. I met, through the coach most of the men's first and second teams, as well as some of the younger players and other members of the club. Being with an older man, who acted in a paternal and protective fashion towards me, gave me a passport into a social setting where a woman on her own would be viewed as an easy target (For further discussion see Middleton, 1986; Whitehead, 1976; and Gill and Maclean 2002). To an extent, I was sheltered from some more obvious sexual advances by his presence.

I became aware, however, of certain tensions in my relationship with the coach and his wife. I was conscious of a real economic obligation to them for their constant hospitality. I wanted to pay for some of my board at least, but they refused to let me, claiming that as I was a student, and already paying a considerable amount for train fares, I should not. In doing this, they seemed to be treating me almost as a member of the family. Away from home, and away from my own parents, I placed my key informants in their places, creating and fabricating a relationship which was not there. I put them into the position of being my surrogate parents. In doing this, I was reversing the usual trend of such relationships in the field, where community members assign the researcher appropriate roles in their lives (Briggs, 1970a; Karim, 1993; Macintyre, 1993).

Though I am unsure of how they themselves saw me, I am certain that they did not see me as their daughter. In fact often I felt annoyed that they expected me to behave as an adult, an independent person! Their references to my status as a student, at college in Edinburgh constantly underlined the way they saw me - as part of their lives, but not necessarily a crucial one. I was an entity entirely separate to them, in a situation which I would rather have been closer. Yet I felt the need to have an emotional stake in their lives - to be adopted so as to be a 'real' part of the team and the club. This feeling gradually faded, as the coach stopped coaching the women's team and became more involved with men's rugby again. He gradually lost contact with the team, as a result of time constraints and personal differences with some of the players, and other team members began to take his place.

I never had another relationship like this one during the course of my fieldwork. In fact, throughout the rest of my time in Bordertown I felt myself to be, appropriately, part of the team and so my relationships with players took on a less intense and more reciprocal character. I was able to talk about my research or what I thought was happening in the team, and they were able to respond. They were also sources of information about how the team worked. However, I must also stress that although good friends with some team members, the majority of the team were simply team mates. On one occasion I can remember remarking to one woman that none of the team knew anything about me other than that I was a student and that I was Australian. She told me that such limited knowledge was common among the women, and that they came together to play rugby, not to become lifelong friends. As such, my relationship with the rest of the team was fairly typical. I tended to gravitate towards some team members more than others, because I liked them and got along better with them than with others. Part of this was probably also because I found them to be good informants as well, so that by spending time with them, I was able to move the research forward. However, I feel that this was the case precisely because we got along well. As a result of our trust, I was able to broach topics of conversation with them I would have been uneasy about with others, and could usually rely on them to fill me in on the latest gossip.

Various problems arose with these relationships, particularly when it came to handling the information I was given. One of the most pertinent was that of how to handle the issue of anonymity. As my area of research was specific - I was in Bordertown precisely because of the issues of identity which arose there, and there was only one women's rugby team in the

town - it became obvious that it would be easy for people in Bordertown to work out who had told me what. This was another reason I was reluctant to show people in Bordertown the work I had done. Some people, particularly the men I interviewed, were especially keen not to be identified in any way. This anxiety was justified when I came to analyse some of the data, and realised that some of the things being said were both offensive to me and to the women. I believe that this happened because I had become accustomed to the sexist attitude of people towards women rugby players, and so thought such sentiments were normal and justified. Rather than involve the club in potential ructions, I anonymised all of my informants and kept interview data confidential. A table of informants is found in Appendix 1. This anonymisation was not entirely successful. People knew who I was friendlier with, and so are likely to be able to make links. This is obviously frustrating to me, as I attempted to both give them some sense of ownership of the work, whilst at the same time preserve my informants' integrity.

I ended up debating with myself the extent to which the anonymity was important for team members, or whether I was worrying because of the possibility of outsiders being able to identify where the town was, and who the people were. In order to try to protect informants from both insiders and outsiders, some material and some issues were omitted from the thesis. This was particularly true of issues surrounding personal histories, sexual or relationship issues, and things told to me informally. At such times I was unsure of whether the person remembered that I was actually researching the team as well as being part of it, and ultimately decided not to record the disclosures. Though I accept that had I found out some of these things earlier in the fieldwork, I would have pursued them as being worthy of comment, as I became more part of the team, I felt that it was better to omit such subjects rather than risk upsetting the team's balance. I was able, however, to bring some of the subjects touched upon in informal conversation up in interviews, where the context was different and people were able to talk about things while being aware that they were being observed.

Interviews

The interviews for this research performed two functions. First, they allowed me to confirm and explore some of the conclusions reached through observations by allowing me to discuss topics that were not able to be brought up in casual conversation. Second, they seemed to give the research some social validity - my informants could see me 'researching'

and they gave me a sense of purpose during times when the work seemed directionless and meaningless.

In all, fourteen interviews were carried out with people involved in the rugby club. Seven of these were with women involved with the team and took the form of individual, semi-structured interviews. This was a smaller number than originally planned. Given the length of time I spent in the field, and the fact that a rugby team usually has a squad of about twenty players, I had hoped to interview about 15. However, in some instances, team members were happy to talk to me but preferred not to be recorded. Others were simply never around, turning up only occasionally. Ultimately, the players interviewed were those I considered to be the 'core' of the team, who were always there at training and matches. The core has shifted somewhat since I interviewed them, but these women represent members of the group who committed a significant amount of their time to rugby.

The other seven interviews were with men involved in the club. Two of these were with groups of three or four players from the men's team who were interviewed together. Five others were a similar structure to those with the women. The men interviewed were people I knew, or who were recommended by people known to me. They were more difficult to track down, as the contact between the men's and women's teams was minimal.

I also carried out seven interviews for my Masters thesis with footballers in Bordertown. They were revisited in order to compare the experiences both of different sports playing over the border, and different class groupings. Footballers tended to be working class, whereas the rugby club was drawn from farming or professional backgrounds.

The interviews ranged from being only ten minutes in length to three quarters of an hour. The former was a frustrating experience with someone who, though normally verbose, refused to give more than yes or no answers. I am still not sure if this was done because of the interview guide, to my lack of skill or to his desire to 'wind me up'. If the last was the case, he succeeded admirably. All interviews except one were tape-recorded. I then attempted to transcribe the interview as soon as possible. In this way, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and one informed the other. Because of the relatively small number of informants, I found analysis relatively easy as I could usually remember who had said what. I did not, therefore, use any particular data analysis package, but rather

tended to write out my impressions about various research themes which emerged quickly from the data as I remembered it.

I wanted to allow people time to talk about issues they felt were important, and so went into the interviews with a semi-structured guide. Ideally, therefore, I wanted the interview to be a two-way process, involving my own emotional engagement and a sharing of information with the respondent (Oakley, 1981: 41; Zaman, 1997: 55; Millen, 1997: 2.2; Puwar, 1997: 1.2). In some instances I found that people were happy to do this and it is perhaps significant that these were the interviews which were richer in data and also the ones in which I invested more of my own personality such that the interview developed into a discussion rather than a 'formal' interview setting. These interviews tended to be with women I knew relatively well, and who knew me well enough both to trust me and to make references which they knew I would understand.

In many other examples, I found that people wanted more guidance, or reassurance that they were talking about the 'right stuff', that they were actually discussing what I was interested in. This happened especially with people I did not know as well, especially with the men. These interviews were characterised by a sense of unease with both parties. I was uncomfortable because in their asking for more direction, I was conscious that they may avoid talking about issues they perceived as being important. They were uncomfortable because, although I was a researcher, I was also a woman who played rugby, and this was the role they were most familiar with. Constant questions and qualifications resulted, particularly when asked their opinions of women who play rugby:

> "Err . . . I can't really say too much because you're . . . "
>
> "Well, I'm not saying big, but quite, tall, you know broad, it's quite dangerous getting into this sort of conversation!"
>
> "Well, describe, in my mind I would think . . . dumpy. (*Laughter*) You're not going to play this to anyone are you?"

Although all of the men carried on with the interview, it is evident by these comments that they were uneasy both about offending me, and that I might go and tell others about what had been said. This was despite guarantees of confidentiality. This uneasiness also contributed to my missing some offensive things which had been said during the interview.

In such cases, playing back the tapes, I was genuinely surprised at what had been said, and can remember only a blank for the duration of the interview.

This rugby player role also limited my interviews with some of the women as well, as I asked questions which they felt I should have known the answers to. It was difficult to explain that I wanted to know what they thought about something, rather than simply consult my own experiences.

One benefit of the interviews, other than the data collected, was that people began to understand more clearly what I was doing, though I am sure some of them still think that the interviews were it! They made them feel more of a part of the research process and reassured some of them that what I was doing was valid work, rather than simply claiming to be a student, but with little or no 'stuff' to show for it.

I am conscious of a profound ambivalence about the interviews as a means of collecting data. When I was interviewing people, though they did not seem to have any difficulties, I was aware that our relationship changed. This was especially true of the women I interviewed, most of whom were my friends. When outside the interview situation, I enjoyed a fairly equal relationship with the women I was with, though I was aware of the fact that I was, either overtly or covertly, studying their behaviour and attitudes. As such, normal conversations were a two way process, with my asking for and receiving opinions. When interviewing, the dynamics and the power balance shifted, and I was put very much in a position of control. I did not feel that it was possible for me to interact as freely as I had done before, and felt that this was somehow a betrayal or exploitation of the friendship I had built previously with the participant.

The ambivalence I feel is tied up in the relationships I had developed with these women and with the uneasy sense that I was exploiting these relationships for my personal gain. In particular, the lack of space to comment on how these people felt about being interviewed, especially some of their nervousness, which was often coupled with a desire to please and an innate politeness which made refusing a request from a friend very difficult.

Significantly, I did not feel any of the same unease when interviewing the men, and I suspect that part of the reason for this was because they did not know me, nor I them, particularly

well. Whilst the women were my friends, the men were acquaintances at best, and so the entire interview dynamic was different. Though the men tended to be more reticent about talking to me honestly about some of their opinions, this was a problem which was easier for me to deal with emotionally, than the sense of a betrayal of trust which I felt with the women.

Oakley comments on some of the aspects of interviewing which stem from precisely the type of relationships and corresponding tensions which the researcher has with the participants:

> Some issues on which research reports do not usually comment are: social/ personal characteristics of those doing the interviewing; the interviewees' feelings about being interviewed and about the interview; interviewers' feelings about interviewees; and quality of interviewer-interviewee interaction; hospitality offered by interviewees to interviewers; attempts by interviewees to use interviewers as sources of information; and the extension of interviewer-interviewee encounters into more broadly-based social relationships.
>
> (Oakley, 1981: 31)

Although a more reflexive approach is now being taken (Millen, 1997), it is still an issue which is worth remembering. It is evident that in order to appreciate fully how the research was carried out, the results and the analysis of the data, a more reflexive approach must be taken. It is impossible to otherwise see how the data was influenced by my own relationship with the participants, and by our mutual expectations of the others' role in that particular relationship.

Embodied fieldwork

One of the most challenging aspects of this fieldwork has been its effect on my awareness of my body. This occurred on a physical level, as my body suffered the strains of playing rugby, and also on a social level, as I became aware of myself as a gendered and a sexual being in the ways people looked at and responded to me. Although the specific nature of the embodiment of rugby is discussed in Chapter 4, this fieldwork was embodied in very specific and interesting ways.

Discussions of the embodiment of fieldwork are not rare. Coffey argues that all fieldwork can be conceptualised in terms of the body (1999: 68), and some texts are devoted specifically

to the embodiment of fieldwork (Kulick and Willson, 1995). How an ethnographer's physicality can affect their access to fieldwork sites and their ability to 'fit in' with people in their fieldwork sites is also a common theme. These discussions range from the researcher's physical appearance and characteristics, and corresponding social meanings of that appearance (Kenna, 1992: 150; Ladner, 1987: 76; Macintyre, 1993: 44; Pettigrew, 1981: 70) to the physical realities of life in the field (Briggs, 1970b: 103; Coffey, 1999: 69). This section discusses some of the ways that my own embodiment impacted on the field and the direction of the research.

Apart from all of the issues revolving around sexuality and gender, my research demanded a quick re-evaluation of my physical state. Having thought of myself as being reasonably fit and active at the start of the fieldwork, it came as a shock to me exactly how much pain I went through during and after a match in the interests of gathering data. Monday mornings after a game were characterised by an inability to move easily. Going up stairs was agony, coming down them nearly impossible. Old bruises and scrapes on my arms and legs were replaced by new ones each week, confirming long-sleeved shirts and trousers as my dress. Even the weather and the season rugby is played in seemed to conspire to make it a physically uncomfortable experience. The ground being played on was frequently frozen solid beneath the three inches of mud, so falling was not pleasant. Muscles were pulled, eyes blackened, and the damage done was occasionally assessed through the haze of a hang-over. It is not an exaggeration to claim that I have been scarred by my experiences - it was as physically intense and exhilarating as anything else I have ever done.

These physical realities aside, there are also the social realities associated with appearance and fieldwork. After my MSc fieldwork, I was aware that appearance and behaviour could be potential problems. I was researching the ways in which football was used to express local and national identity. As a young woman, entering a very male-dominated setting, I was conscious of an immediate sexual interest in me on the part of my informants. It seemed that though I saw them as being potential friends and informants, they saw me as a potential sexual partner, and treated me accordingly.

This came as an unpleasant surprise. I saw myself to be in Bordertown in a professional capacity. In approaching the field in such a way, I neglected to think of myself as being a sexual creature, or a gendered one (Moreno, 1995: 246). As a result, my informants' reactions

were incomprehensible until I realised that my informants had a different agenda to myself (Killick, 1995: 97 - 98). This alerted me to the fact that I had to see myself as being a gendered being and that, as a result, I was going to have to obey certain gender roles in Bordertown. Unlike Kenna (1992: 150) who saw herself as being young and foreign, an outsider, had this identity accepted, and was therefore treated differently to women in the Greek community she was studying, I was treated as the women in Bordertown are. In this sense, they accepted me into their world, showing me that I was less different than I assumed, and that I would have to play by their rules (Dubisch, 1995: 32; Golde, 1986). (For a further discussion of this issue, see Gill and Maclean 2002.)

As a result of this experience, I began my fieldwork at Bordertown Rugby Club with the awareness that gender and sexuality were potential issues. As a woman who was participating in an ambiguous activity, I was forced to engage in new, and not altogether welcome ways, with issues surrounding my identity as a person, as a woman and as heterosexual. These issues have arisen both within the team and as a response to outsiders' reactions to myself and my team mates.

Embodiedness is also an issue because rugby is a highly physical, sexualised environment. As a sport, rugby necessitates close physical contact between people. It is also a sport in which homosexual references are common due to some of the positions required of players in playing the game. But having said this, there is also a strong code of behaviour that forbids the close examination of another's body (as discussed in Chapter 5). The players' bodies are under continual scrutiny, but in such a way that sex and sexual contact and connotations are negated through banter or songs. There is also, linked to this, a tendency towards enacting a specifically heterosexual sexuality. This means that players, both male and female, tend to exaggerate their heterosexuality so that they do not arouse the suspicions of their team mates. This was not an initial problem for me as I was in a serious relationship with a boyfriend when I started the fieldwork which placed me firmly into an `acceptable' sexual identity. It was assumed within the team, therefore, that I was heterosexual. Following this relationship, I made no effort to disguise other relationships I had during my time in the field. I felt that this tended to establish my sexual identity as heterosexual. This I felt was important because of the prevailing homophobia in the Jesters. I felt at the start that had my sexuality been ambiguous to the team, it may have affected my chances of gaining access.

This suspicion was confirmed when I discovered that, despite the efforts outlined above, a rumour had gone around the team that I was lesbian. Although I was aware that it is assumed that most women who play rugby are lesbian, I had somehow thought that this would not apply to me. However, my sexuality was called into question both by complete strangers, and also by team-mates who had heard that I had been approaching other women on the team. This was a shock to me, shown by my reaction to a woman approaching me with the assumption that I was gay. When I told a friend about this, in tones of total bewilderment and shock, she looked at me, smiled and said `This is a really new space for you, isn't it?' She was right. It was, and I found myself adopting an increasingly defensive attitude towards outsiders - I play rugby, but I like men.

Apart from my relationships with the women in the club, there was also the issue of dealing with the male members of the club. As a woman, I was a sexual object for some people involved in rugby. Moreno wrote that:

> The question of whether to have sexual relations in the field is something that many female anthropologists have to deal with not occasionally, or once in a while, but more or less continuously.
>
> (1995: 247)

By this, I mean to say that my gender, however irrelevant it was to me, meant that I had to interact with half the members of the club in a specific way on a continuous basis. I was unable to attend men's training sessions or go out into pubs alone unless chaperoned by a man or accompanied by at least one other woman. Whilst out with one of my closer friends, a married man, I was aware, as he was, that people were talking about us. I was asked directly on several occasions what was going on, and had to explain that it was nothing. Though people accepted this, it was still an issue, much to my friend's and his wife's amusement. There was also the issue of men using my friend as a way of meeting me.

It was difficult to strike the right balance - being forward enough to ask questions without being too forward. Ultimately, I decided that it was better to be up front about what was going on. Luckily, some people were equally blunt, asking what was going on, and was I interested in going out with so and so. Once the issue was out in the open, it was far easier to simply explain that, though I spoke to several people quite intensively, this did not mean

that I was involved with them. At times, though, the exchange got quite heated, and resulted in my pointing out that although I was friendly speaking with a number of people, including my questioner, I was not sleeping with them. This remained a constant source of exasperation for myself and amusement for others.

As a result of these experiences, I adopted a reflexive approach to fieldwork. I therefore began to allow myself to be myself in the field (Fetterman, 1991: 89), but to also try to be aware of what I was doing and the potential impact this might have had on the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1997: 223). This was both an easy and difficult thing to do. As a woman who played rugby, I was able to experience many of the difficulties my team mates did. However, I was also a foreigner and a stranger. Originally from Sydney, I could not relate to either Bordertown culture or the debates surrounding Scottish and English national identity (indeed as an Australian, I was initially somewhat sceptical of the difference between the two). My distance, and my ability to remain at a distance in these aspects also helped the analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methods of research used, and has emphasised many of the difficulties and problems encountered. Reflecting on the experience, it seems that many of the problems were simply to be expected, products of the type of research I was doing and the relationships I developed in the field. This was especially true of the difficulties associated with managing my own identity, with juggling the demands of research with the obligations of friendship and the performance of my own identities as woman, rugby player, friend and researcher. The overarching theme of my fieldwork is that it has been a sharp learning curve, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of various research methods and my own feelings about them. Some of my experiences will undoubtedly affect how I carry out research in the future - I doubt, for example, that I will ever carry out participant-observation in a sports team again!

In particular, my perception of myself was changed because of my research (Freedman, 1970: 357; Ladner, 1987: 76). My awareness of this had a profound impact on the ways in which my data was analysed and the types of relationships I developed with my informants. Moving from a conception of the fieldwork as being an emotionally detached exercise, in which I would not become involved with the team, I became a member of the Jesters. I was

able to develop friendships with my team mates, participate in their social and sporting lives, and examine the ways in which they handled their identities. I also learnt how to handle my own, an experience that impacted on my data collection and analysis. Some of the problems outlined, particularly those related to the conflicting demands of research and friendship were outlined above. My future research will be carried out with the knowledge that I will probably become involved with the people I am studying, and that this may, in fact, be beneficial to the research as a whole. I am unlikely to carry out research which is as physically demanding as this project, but am aware of the importance of becoming a part of the social context being examined. I am also more aware of the emotional toll of research of this nature, and feel myself to be better equipped to deal with it.

My close association with the Jesters drew to an end, not because the research was finishing, but because I was moving away from the area in order to work. The final game I played I remember because of my failure to score a try when given a golden opportunity. This was especially irritating because it was the only opportunity granted to me in two seasons. It is also memorable because of the agony I found myself in the following day, unable to turn my head, legs bruised and shoulders stiff. I was presented with a gift from the team, was invited to a wedding and a party, and then left. The following week, I rang up to find out how the team had got on in their first League match of the season. They had lost, but were out celebrating the start of another year. I was conscious of a profound sense of distance between them and myself - I was no longer on the inside, but instead was excluded. This changing dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, and shifting relationships is a theme of this research. It seems to also have been a theme of my methodology.

Chapter 3:
Setting the scene

A necessary part of a case-study such as this is an introduction to the main participants in the study, and a sense of where and how they live. This chapter provides just such a background. Although the social and economic characteristics of Bordertown will be discussed, the main emphasis will be on giving a sense of the rugby club itself and the culture which surrounds the game of rugby.

The chapter opens with a brief history of Bordertown Rugby Football Club. This is followed by an introduction to the Jesters, particularly those members of the team who form the core of the group, including people who no longer play, but who remain heavily involved. A sense of Bordertown itself follows this, but concentrates mainly on those aspects of life which are relevant to the team and the club. What emerges is a personalised, or specialised, sense of Bordertown rather than a general profile of the town.

In the interests of protecting my informants, some details have been changed or omitted. This includes the omission of a specific reference book about the town which was produced locally. Including some useful background information, it also includes Bordertown's real name in the title, which if included, would render the entire exercise of anonymisation useless.

Bordertown Rugby Football Club

A rugby club was first established in Bordertown in 1926. However, it had no real 'home' in the town, struggling to find both pitches and players, and closed down during the Second World War. It was not until nearly thirty years later that it was re-formed in 1968 by a group of players from the surrounding area and members of the original club. This time there were no problems getting players, and by the end of the 1968-69 season, a second and third fifteen were regularly fielded, and rugby had been adopted as the main winter boys sport at the local secondary school. With a regular pool of players, and the guarantee of a continuing supply of young players, the club has flourished.

The home ground of the club is situated at a small distance from Bordertown itself, located in Pitton. This is an old mining village, and the present clubhouse stands on the site of the old

Miners' Welfare Institute. The club took over the lease of the site in 1972, and a new clubhouse was built in 1995. Recently, the club has added a stand alongside the First XV pitch (although diehard supporters tend to range themselves along the far side of the pitch) and plans are afoot to upgrade the changing facilities.

During the two seasons I was there, Bordertown fielded a total of ten teams. Three were the senior men's teams who are the mainstay of the club. The atmosphere of the club tends to be set by the success or otherwise of the men's first team. One Colts team was run, for boys between 16 and about 18. This was the second most important representative of the club, as these tend to be players who were considered ready or almost ready to break into senior rugby, but who represent the club at big junior competitions. Three midi squads were formed and one for the under-16s. We then see the mini-rugby, which is not really competitive rugby but rather introduces boys to rugby. As can be seen, most of the divisions here are based on age, although there is considerable overlap between memberships. Following this, we can see a break-down in ability within age groups. Ideally, what will happen is that a group of players will start playing together, and will work their way up through the club as a group. By the time they start playing senior rugby, they have been playing together for approximately ten years. The final team in the club is the Jesters, the women's section of the club, formed in 1994.

The Jesters

During the two seasons I played for the Jesters, numbers of players varied from lows of ten for games (and five for training) to up to twenty. The team was based around a core of between five and seven women who trained consistently and also committed themselves to games. Of this group, one woman no longer plays, having retired for health reasons. For the following season, another of this group has dropped out because of pregnancy, one has claimed that this is her last season and that she is reaching retirement age, and another is unsure. However, at least three others are still planning to play, and new players join all the time. Membership fluctuates, therefore and what follows is a snap-shot of the Jesters in a particular time, over the 2000 - 2001 and 2001 - 2002 seasons.

Players' ages range from 16 (the youngest age a woman is allowed to play in Scotland) to nearly 40. Their occupations are also disparate, though it is significant that no players in this period had attended university. At least one of the players, Belinda, is still at school and

plans to attend university and some others have done various apprenticeships and in-house training schemes. In some senses this reflects a general trend in Bordertown. According to the 1991 census, Bordertown had a population of 12 405 living in the town itself. At this time, 1 505 people were aged between 16 and 24 years, 19% (approximately 286 individuals) had 'student' as their occupation. At the same time, approximately 335 people were aged between 16 and 17, and 1 972 between 18 and 29. It is evident, therefore, that relatively few people continue with education past 16, and this is backed up by the figures for successful university applications of all ages in 1997 and 1998. In 1997 they numbered 105, dropping to 90 in 1998. Although this is not a precise measure of how many people actually continue to university, it is a good indication that most do not. The fact, too, that 76.3% in the 16-24 age bracket are classed as economically active backs up the assumption that most people either finish school at 16 or do not continue to higher education once they finish school. In this sense, Belinda is in the minority in the team and town.

Other women on the team have a variety of jobs. Four of the core members have jobs in clerical areas, in the local council dealing with housing or social issues, or working in private businesses. None of the women work in the professions, although two work in the police and two are in the armed forces. Others work as 'process workers' in one of the processing plants nearby, or in part-time jobs in shops or bars. Some work more than one job. None, however, are unemployed.

Again, this fits the general profile of Bordertown. Unemployment was running at a relatively low 8.7% in 1991 but the majority of people in the region of Bordertown are employed in managerial, technical or skilled occupations:

Table 1: Comparison of social classes between 'Border region' and the United Kingdom

Social Class	I	II	IIIN	IIIM	IV	V	Other
UK	6.6	31.1	22.8	19.5	14.6	4.4	1.0
'Border region'	4.6	26.3	25.0	21.5	15.8	6.0	...

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics, Spring 2000

The social classes above are based on occupation. Class I are professional occupations, II managerial and technical IIIN, skilled occupations non-manual, IIIM are skilled occupations

manual. Class IV represents partly skilled occupations and V are unskilled occupations. 'Other' includes members of the armed forces, those not stating their social class and those whose previous occupation was more than eight years ago or who have never had a job. People from 'Border region' like the rest of Britain, tend to be clustered between class II and IV, but their proportion is higher in all of these classes except in class II.

This is reflected in the occupations of the Jesters as well, using a sample of players from the 2000 - 2001 season. Of sixteen players who played regularly during this season, none of the women playing had professional occupations, and only one was in a managerial or technical position. Four had occupations which placed them in Class IIIN. Class IV included two police officers. Four of the women worked in a factory near Bordertown. Five players I placed in the category of 'Other' including the students, of whom there were three, one person working for the armed forces and one for the corrective services.

Average weekly wages in Border region for such occupations are lower than both the United Kingdom's and the English average. The exception to this is men in full-time manual employment where wages are slightly higher than the national average:

Table 2: Comparison of average weekly wages for the United Kingdom, England and Border region. Totals given in £ sterling

	All Full-time male	F/T male manual	F/T male non-manual	All F/T female	F/T female manual	F/T female non-manual
UK	451.60	342.70	532.50	336.70	227.20	356.60
England	459.20	345.40	540.70	341.50	230.10	361.60
Border region	398.90	346.10	457.30	306.00	215.40	324.90

(Source: New Earnings Survey, Office for National Statistics and Department of Enterprise, April 2000)

As a general rule, it can be seen that although Border region is almost on par with the rest of the United Kingdom, and in some instances is actually doing better economically, overall, wages are lower (in some cases significantly if one looks at women's wages). This is exacerbated by the clustering of people in jobs which are lower paid.

The players who make up the core of the team may be considered representative of both the team as a whole and of women in Bordertown generally. Economically and educationally they fit Bordertown's general profile and may be considered representative in other ways as well. The men in the rugby club have a slightly different socio-economic profile which runs slightly contrary both to Bordertown's general profile and to the profile of rugby in the Scottish borders. The men's team has a higher percentage of students, people living away from the town and professionals than does the women's team. In this sense, they are more like 'traditional' middle class rugby players than they are like players in the Borders who tend to be from a more diverse background.

All but one of the Jesters live in or around Bordertown, and have done for most of their lives. The seven women who form the core of the team all currently live in Bordertown. Their ages range from 18 to 36, all have been involved with rugby for at least two years and it forms an important part of their social life as well as a pastime. All exhibit considerable dedication to the sport, although one no longer plays, and consistently turn up for both training and games.

Wendy, Belinda and Ciara are aged between 18 and 32. All are single and have been playing rugby for two or three years. None of the three is originally from Bordertown, and two currently live in the area outside the town. All three have work or study commitments away from Bordertown as well, and the rugby team represents an important link with the town. However, all three are slightly ambivalent about Bordertown, a product perhaps of their having lived away. Becoming involved with rugby through friends, it is one way of staying in touch with people and seeing people. As a result, the representative side of rugby, and the debates about national and local identity (to be discussed later) are not as important to them.

Emily, Bethany, Trish and Barbara are 'older' rugby players, if not in years than in experience and playing ability. Bethany, Trish and Barbara were founding team members, and Emily joined soon afterwards. They tend to be players (or ex-players/ managers) who are gone to for advice either about rugby or other things. They are leaders on the pitch. As such, they also have tended to occupy high places in the team's official hierarchy as well, being captains, vice-captains, managers or contacts with the Scottish Rugby Union and representatives of the women's team at the club on committees. As well as being 'older' in terms of rugby, they all also seem to occupy 'older' positions in life as well. Three of the four are in long term relationships or are married. Two of the four have children.

Although these players do not always agree (indeed, very rarely do. Personality clashes are frequent and unpleasant), they are generally united in presenting an 'acceptable' face of the team. They decide what is acceptable behaviour and are responsible for pulling people back into line should they stray. They are leaders in most senses of the word, defining the limits of acceptability, either through their own behaviour or censorship of others.

The importance of this type of leadership is seen if we consider the Jesters' reason for existence and how this works. As a disparate collection of people, a strong core is needed to keep the group together. However, it is also significant that the group exists simply in order to be able to play rugby. This is not a group of people who get along with each other, or who even necessarily like each other. Rather they come together for the game, and a few drinks afterwards, and then go home again. Friendship, therefore, tends to be between specific people, and cliques or factions can form in the team. This core group of players are also sometimes the ringleaders of opposing factions, but more frequently their role is to try and harmonise the team into an acceptable public face, to try to paper over the cracks. This is very important as Bordertown, although a fairly big town, is formed around a strong social network which operates as a very integrated community. News and gossip spread rapidly. Public disagreements are potentially embarrassing as well as becoming public knowledge very quickly.

Bordertown

Bordertown itself is located near the border between England and Scotland, in an area of great historical significance for relations between the two nations. From the twelfth century onwards, the area was constantly being fought over as both Scotland and England sought to claim political and national sovereignty. The issue of sovereignty was partially resolved in 1249, with the instigation of a formal code of laws relating directly to the borderlands, which deemed them to be distinct from both Scotland and England (Neville, 1998: 2). Although this went some way towards dealing with the day-to-day difficulties of administering a region which straddled two different legal systems, the issue of possession and control for national sovereignty remained unresolved - this area seemed to become something of an anomaly to both sides, belonging to neither.

This lack of belonging to either place is symbolised by the fact that Bordertown Rugby Club belongs both to the Rugby Football Union (which is English) and Scottish Rugby Union. Teams from the club play on both sides of the border depending on where most of the closest teams of the appropriate standard are based (Duke and Crolley, 1996: 62). For example, the firsts play in Scotland, the thirds in England.

The sense of difference, and indeed distance, from both the Scottish and English national identities and communities, felt by inhabitants of Bordertown is palpable. Despite their pride in their ambiguity, there is still a sense in which Bordertown's inhabitants feel like misfits:

> I don't know . . . when we go to Bigtown, they say we speak Scottish, we're Scottish, and when we go to Scotston, they say we're English . . . It works both ways . . . We're actually on the borderline.
>
> (David)

> We're just somewhere in-between somehow. . . We talk different to anyone else. . . . You know? Half and half.
>
> (Richard)

People in Bordertown live at the point where 'We' become "Them'. As a result, they have an identity which is based on a lack of belonging and a deep sense of difference.

Bordertown itself is a sizeable town, with four schools which draw from the surrounding country as well. However, three of these schools are middle school, catering to students aged between 9 and 13. There is one high school, which implies that many students go to other schools around the region on both sides of the border. The high school caters mainly for students who live in the town proper, with a few who live close enough to be bussed in. Among the women in the Jesters, all who grew up in Bordertown attended Bordertown High. Otherwise, they attended schools in their local villages. None of them attended boarding school although some are currently travelling to college. This is in contrast to the men, several of whom have been sent to boarding school and subsequently have continued to university.

Bordertown is surrounded by farmland. Most of the farms in this area concentrate on either cereals (16.7%) or sheep and cattle production (27.1%). Employment is found either on farms, in Bordertown itself or in one of the two nearby processing plants, one for salmon caught at Berwick and the other making and packaging pastry and savory foodstuffs. Jobs at these two

places tend to run in families, with both husbands and wives working there, and children often being found jobs there when they leave school. This gives the employment patterns in some sections of Bordertown an almost dynastic element. It is also common for children to be working while still at school or for adults to work two jobs, one in the evening behind the bar, or at chemists or the local supermarket. Otherwise, a significant number of people commute to either Scotston or Bigtown, two large towns situated approximately two hours away, for work or to study. Interestingly, the majority of middle class people in Bordertown who live there also seem to work there, having positions as vets, doctors, solicitors, owners of small businesses or farmers. The people who travel are employed as shop assistants or are employed by bodies such as the armed forces or police.

The town itself is a mix of old and new buildings, centred around the high street in the old part of the town. The remains of the original fortifications mark this area, and the modern town has expanded beyond them, sprawling away to the east in new buildings and council housing. This is also where the local supermarket and large petrol station are. To the west is a small industrial area, where agricultural suppliers are located, and south and east are farmlands. The older part of the town tends towards the quaint with the post office, bakery, and a couple of charity shops nestling beside several tea rooms and two banks on the high street, running down to the town hall. There are five pubs, three hotels and a nightclub on or just off the high street, as well as numerous other establishments around the town. It is hard to see how there is that much custom in Bordertown to support all of these establishments, though experience shows that the consumption of alcohol is an important part of the social milieu of the town.

A general sense exists that Bordertown is a town which is undergoing a gradual but definite decline. Shops and small businesses appear to be closing along the high street, the perception that young people have nothing to do, and that many of them seem to move away once they finish school either to find work or to continue their education. However, this does not seem to be supported by statistics. Although there appears to be a slight decrease in population between 1991 and mid-1998 dropping to approximately 12 100, the proportion of people who are aged over 60 has remained almost exactly the same, rising from 24% to about 26%. In other words, about 5% of the population has moved out of the economically active category. It would appear that Bordertown is experiencing a small decline, but is generally holding its own economically.

Socially, there seems to be a general air of resignation, and people seem to believe that the town itself has nothing to offer them. Certainly, for people who have left the town to get educated there are few jobs to tempt them back. Belinda is one such person, who perceives Bordertown as a limited, narrow place, with few opportunities for growth or advancement:

> Well, there's nothing to do, apart from, obviously you can play sport . . . and but apart from that there no, there's not a lot to do. You've got your sport and that's it. You've got Imperial Pictures with fleas in chairs and . . . the swimming pool but that's sport again, and that's it really. . . . And the pub. . . . No good jobs. Nothing. It's like a hell-hole. You have to climb out, get out.
>
> (Belinda)

Although Belinda attended the local high school until this year, she has elected to take her A-levels at a college in Bigton, approximately fifty miles distant. If she goes to university, it is unlikely that she will return to Bordertown. This feeling is supported by others, who told me explicitly that Bordertown was dying, that 'too many old folk' were moving in and that younger people were gradually becoming marginalised.

There is certainly very little in Bordertown for young people to do. It is common to see them either hanging around on street corners or, especially for young men, to drive around and around the town in either their cars, or on their scooters. They all then seem to meet up with each other, and with the girls and just 'be'. But particularly on weekend evenings and in the summer, it is possible to stand in the street for several hours and see the same cars do circuits in what appears to be a fruitless quest to find something, anything, to do. In many ways this is typical of small towns across Britain.

This is also reflected if we look at the crime statistics for Bordertown, where violence against the person in 2000 - 2001 recorded 165 instances whereas robbery offences had only 1 recorded instance, and sexual offences 16 for the same period. This implies a certain amount of boredom on the part of some people, and an inclination to get into trouble. It should be noted, too, that these are only reported instances, and so are unlikely to be entirely accurate. Although assaults and fights do occur on most weekends in Bordertown, and a visible police presence is common at closing time, more often, the violence takes the form of aggressive posturing and verbal abuse. People, men and women, are not inclined to back down from confrontation which can make for a sometimes unpleasant atmosphere, particularly if out

alone or unknown in the town. Violence against women by men, and the possibility of sexual assault is less discussed, although thanks to a rather masculine atmosphere, some of the conversation, groping and comments may well be interpreted as hostile if not actually threatening.

Violence and fighting was certainly a common feature of conversation, particularly after nights out. Within the rugby team, stories of fights or arguments while out were common, with the most memorable being an argument between two team members which culminated in one team member vandalising a pub toilet door which the other member had shut to get away. Another incident, occurring early in the fieldwork occurred and served as one of my first contacts with the Jesters. Whilst sitting in a pub with a group of young people, one of the men I was with was accused of 'looking' at another man at the bar. The older man picked up a stool and waved it at our group. The men I was with laughed and began singing a football song, at which the bar stool was lobbed in our direction. The fight was eventually broken up by members of the rugby team. Incidents such as these are common and it seems that disputes continue to run and run. This particular incident occurred after an England-Scotland football match, one of the main causes of trouble in Bordertown, and seems to have been a continuation of an argument started after the match and carried on to the following day. As a result of a discussion of the above dispute, I discovered that several fights occurred on the Saturday night immediately after the match. The girl I was with was glassed (had a broken glass thrown at her. Another version is to have a broken glass thrust into the face.), along with several of her friends, though it seems that this was provoked after they sang football songs at opposition supporters. There were also fights in several other pubs and blood which I saw on the pavements when I was coming home from a birthday party, in an area with no pubs in it.

Trouble, however, tends to be limited to specific individuals, families and areas. If these were avoided, then there were no problems. There were some recognised people to be avoided, and people tended to warn outsiders about them, not to 'mess about' with them. But as long as these rules were kept, then unless it was a football weekend, chances of finding random trouble are small:

> They could be the hardest guys in Bordertown, and they might fight every week, but you get to know them, and as long as you don't annoy them, they'll not annoy you. You know?
>
> (Evan)

This reinforces the idea that trouble usually starts as something to do rather than out of genuine malicious intent. Boredom is a big problem in Bordertown.

In addition to fighting, underage drinking and smoking are also prevalent and occur with parental knowledge and consent. The only thing which seems to gain real social disapproval is the use of hard drugs. There is one residential area in Bordertown where this is known to be a problem, significantly in an area where there is also a lot of council housing. The 'druggies' as they are known, are seen to be 'put' there rather than have them spread out over Bordertown. In general, people do not seem to have a problem with the drugs themselves, but rather that the behaviour of the users, which lowers the 'tone' of the neighbourhood. However, this does not seem to be a very large problem, as if it were, the figures for burglary (which are at 65 for the 2000 - 2001 period) would be expected to be much higher.

A final issue regarding young people in the town is that of underage pregnancy and the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Underage pregnancies appear to be a fairly regular occurrence with legal abortions for girls aged 16 and under in this area run at nearly twice the rate as that of England (accounting for just over 9% of the regional total compared to just over 5% of the national total). Unplanned pregnancies seem to be as common, but the attitude in my experience is that people simply have to get on with it and deal with it. It is not seen as being a social stigma, although it certainly has limiting effects for both the women and men involved. In only one instance I am aware of did the couple marry. It is more common for the girl or woman to raise the child alone, a fact reflected in the fact that 66% of people on income support in the Bordertown local authority are women.

Kinship and community

There are two striking features of Bordertown which are also important to mention. The first is the degree of kinship which exists in the town, and this is strongly related to the second, which is the intense sense of community in Bordertown and the loyalty people feel to the community. This is partially related to the sense of difference, outlined above, which people feel from their surrounding national communities, belonging to neither this nor that one. But

it is also partially due to the apparently ever present sense of the family, interconnectedness and close social networking which occurs at every level across Bordertown.

Although Bordertown is a sizeable community, and it is obviously impossible for one person to know everybody, there are certain networks which people tap into which enable them to develop a sense of knowing 'everybody'. This can sometimes result in something of a goldfish bowl atmosphere:

> Everybody's related to everybody. . . . It's the only way to explain the people in Bordertown. You've got your families, when you look at it, you've got your Flannigans, and that lot, and if you speak to one Flannigan 'Oh, I know her, she's my first cousin twice removed.' And you think 'What?' and then you've got the Brannigan's as well, and they don't really get on with anybody, so yeah. Everybody's related to everybody. A lot of them pride themselves on knowing everybody here. . . .They've just got their own families . . . and you can go somewhere and talk to the family in Highcliff. So you've got the family in Highcliff, related to the family in Eastcliff, related to the family in wherever. . . . So you, you, your identity's with your family. So there's not so much a Bordertown identity as an identity with your family within Bordertown. . . . [W]hen we first moved to Bordertown, I only got to know one person, and they're having ructions with another family, so like, you can't be friends with that person, and the other person. So, it's hard. But once you get to know everybody, you obviously know *everybody*. The people you know know other people and you obviously get to know everybody. Can't go anywhere or do anything without everybody knowing. . . . Like I go out and do my own things outside the family, like my rugby and that, keep myself to myself. . . . it's hard because someone'll always know. And so you just be yourself, be an individual. I mean you were influenced a lot when you were a kid, of course, but I was really alone when I was younger . . .
>
> (Belinda)

Although this makes difficulties in some ways, the importance of family does tend to make this a community which is very protective and close around its members. This may incline members to 'adopt' outsiders into their families, sharing their homes and including them in family events such as Christmas. The women's rugby team is sometimes referred to as sisters, parents of team members are shared, and there are several close relatives involved in the team itself and the rugby club generally. In many ways the rugby club also serves as a family

for its members, encouraging the closeness of bonds and obligations usually found between family members. These obligations to family and friends may extend to physical defence and protection, and contribute to the violence and aggression outlined above. Much of the violence stems from supporting friends, or more importantly, family.

This is a pattern which is repeated in other communities in Britain. Both Elias (1977) and Gilligan (1987) have noted the importance of family in developing community bonds. This is particularly evident where several families have lived in the community for several generations. The continuity of acquaintance emphasised the difference between those who 'belonged' there, and those recently moved in. The bonds of kinship and the relationships built over time enable a strong degree of cohesion which is then used to develop strong bonds of community. These bonds, like those in Bordertown, were based on shared values and ways of doing things. These ritualised interactions and behaviours can then be used to exclude new inhabitants of the town. This is not to imply that exclusion or insider status denotes a lack of knowledge about other people in the town. In fact, the reverse is true as thanks to such close social bonds, news is likely to travel very quickly.

Outside the rugby club, in Bordertown generally, people do have a very broad knowledge of most of the people who are likely to be around on a night out in any of the pubs. On no occasion can I remember asking someone who someone else was and having them not know the answer, or not know someone the person was with, or not get an answer from someone else in the group. People have a high social awareness of who lives in Bordertown and these networks are constantly being maintained and developed, particularly through the medium of information exchange and gossip (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 90; Gluckman, 1963: 308; Noon and Delbridge, 1993: 25). This flow of information occurs across social contexts and allows people to 'plug into' more than one network. In this sense, information becomes currency, which results in gossip, and the 'goldfish bowl' effect:

> When you, but the thing is once, the place it's so, you know, so close knit once someone knows it tends, never mind the rugby club, it just gets around the town. Cause people know everyone. You know I'll talk to the footballers, they'll see me and recognise me with the shirt on, it's just, golf club and everything it just intermingles into one. And it's pretty hard to keep anything secret to be honest.
>
> (Michael)

Michael is well known in Bordertown because of his membership of several sporting clubs, because of his family's situation in Bordertown and because he knows people in several contexts, information travels quickly between them.

Once an individual has been accepted into the community, and become known, they are also placed into a wider network of people. My own experience implies that acceptance into a small section of a social circle results in a very wide group of people, not necessarily known personally to an individual, looking out for them. This is not only in terms of making sure that physical safety is not threatened, but also extends to making sure that you have someone to talk to, enough to drink and that you will get home at night safely. This is expected to be reciprocated, and can be sometimes quite wearing as the flip side of this is that a person must indulge in a great deal of small-talk with people either slightly known or very well known when on a night out (a common feature of life in small towns as Wight (1993: 11) found). It is hard to know, sometimes, which is more tiring, the constant small-talk when known or the constant staring and silence when not. An innate sense of courtesy and care is extended to strangers. Though a fairly insular and sometimes distant place, people in Bordertown have a strong sense of hospitality towards strangers. Once introduced, it is considered rude and ignorant not to go and talk to someone, particularly if they seem to be standing alone or not having a good time. Socialising in Bordertown is not really about meeting new people, but is rather about strengthening existing bonds or forging new ones with people already known.

This relates to the importance of family in Bordertown. The concept of family extends past the immediate relations, and into the more distant realms of cousins, second cousins and relations by marriage. This extension means that many people are either related to a wide circle of people, or knows someone who is related to them. As a result, people can be quickly and accurately fitted into an individual's social framework through reference to their family. It gives people an immediate access to a network of support and resources not available to outsiders. This is obviously not always entirely welcome:

> F.G: If you married a local girl, would you become a local? Would that help the integration?
> Evan: I think it would do, yeah. Because you'd be integrated with all her family, who are local and you'd be integrated with all her friends who'd be local. So's you'd be [able to?] meet people. . . . Everyone'd know your business, like. I prefer to keep myself to myself, like.

Because of this type of social structure, outsiders cause difficulties for people in Bordertown as they cannot be put into a comfortable category. As a result, incomers are often made to feel uncomfortable unless they have a known social role in the town, such as membership of a sports team or friendship with one of the locals. This is felt especially by people moving into the town.

It is possible that this is the aspect of Bordertown society that I was most aware of because I was discussed a great deal. As an obvious outsider, and a foreigner to boot, I was looked at and asked about at every opportunity. In addition, because I was part of such a visible group in the Jesters, it was obvious that I would be noticed everywhere. Although I was never approached directly, it was possible to see when the Jesters were being asked about me. It became more evident when they came over with big grins and told me who was asking about me, and did I want them to buy me a drink?

These kinship links have had the effect of tightening community bonds in Bordertown. Bordertown can be an insular place, emphasising the importance of local identity to the inhabitants. Caught between England and Scotland, and with a relatively small and inter-related population, this is perhaps not surprising. A split exists between people who were born in the town, people well known in the town and people who have moved to the town (Crow and Allan, 1994: xvi). Every person is acutely aware of where they fit in, and how this impacts on their social status in the town. At the top of this particular pyramid are those 'locals' whose families are so much a part of the town's fabric that their identity is unquestioned. This results in a category of identity within Bordertown of 'Bordertownians' or locals, people who were always there (For further discussion see Gilligan (1987: 66)). The sense of place and where a person was born is crucial to becoming fully accepted as a local, due mainly to the importance of family:

> A local is, err . . . oh (clears throat) . . . just someone who's been here all the time.
>
> (Jared)

The sense of timelessness of local identity is quite striking. A person's family becomes woven into the fabric of the community, and so an individual's status is unquestioned and unchanging. This idea of a community and its relationship to 'localness' is perhaps best described by Bell and Newby in discussing community:

> Implies a recognition of something taken for granted and the assertion of the self-evident - they are 'given'; they simply exist. For this reason, membership of communities is largely unconscious unless it is threatened; otherwise one just belongs, and generally irrevocably so.
>
> (1976: 196)

The sense of just belonging in Bordertown is complicated by the fact that one does not merely need to 'always be there'. Rather, Jared clarifies this when explaining why he was a local, but his best friend not:

> Probably because I was born here. The likes of Dave, he wasn't born in Bordertown and . . . lives here and . . . err he like says oh . . . I want to move away from Bordertown, don't like Bordertown. Things like that. Where I'm a Tonian, and I wouldn't really want to move away from Bordertown. I like Bordertown.
>
> (Jared)

Although Dave was born overseas, his parents are from Bordertown and he has lived there for most of his life. But Jared cannot perceive Dave as a local because he wasn't born there, and because he seems to want to leave. Locals in Bordertown very rarely seem to want to experience life outside - the local is comfortable and does not tend to be interested in life outside their community:

> Richard: Oh well, I love Bordertown. Couldn't live anywhere else.
> F.G.: Have you ever tried to live anywhere else?
> Richard: Nup. And when I go and visit other places, I cannae wait to go home.

The level of insularity this type of comment suggests is also reflected in the questions put to me regarding the distance away from my home, and my choosing to live so far from my family. Like Dave, I could never be considered a local, in part because of my ability to imagine living elsewhere.

The grades of inclusion and localness are something which incomers are particularly sensitive to, and frequently analyse more clearly:

> F.G.: . . . . What does it take to become a local?
> Evan: I think you've got to be born in Bordertown to be a local.
> F.G.: Yeah?
> Evan: I mean, dinnae get us wrong, people are really friendly, they'll welcome you and all, but I still don't consider myself as a local. I don't know enough people. Everyone in Bordertown knows everybody, and they know everyone's business . . . and . . . um . . . I don't know, I probably keep myself to myself . . I don't know enough people, although I do know a lot of people living in Bordertown . . . I think if I'd lived here for the past twenty five years I'd be classed as a local.

One of the interesting things about this passage is that Evan differentiates between knowing a lot of people living in Bordertown and knowing enough people to be classed as a local. What he means by this is the difference in the quality of knowledge gleaned by an outsider, through personal contacts, and the knowledge of someone who is connected more intimately to the community through the family. Thus, Evan knows X as someone he sees at the pub and works beside. A local knows X as someone he works with, he went to school with, and who is married to Y who is Z's cousin, and whose mother is the aunt of the local's wife.

Local identity is therefore tied to the relationship between family and knowledge. Bordertown is a place which operates on knowing everyone and getting things done is more often a case of knowing the right person to ask and having the personal contact with them. This is why outsiders sometimes find it difficult:

> F.G.: What does it take to become a local in Bordertown? Like could you ever become a local in Bordertown?
> Emily: I don't think I could, could ever be a local. It's a case of everyone in Bordertown knows each other. Cause they just grew up, they all grew up together. And that's how you become a local. There's no way you could just come and stay a few years and you think that's it, nuh, never. You could get along with everybody and be well known, but you'll never be a local.
> F.G.: Never be accepted?
> Emily: Nuh. No one of them.

The curious thing about this is that these attitudes seem to diverge on class lines. All of the people discussed above work in relatively low paid and unskilled occupations. People who have left Bordertown to work have a different view of locality. By Jared's definition of

localness, he is one, but Dave is not despite the fact they have both lived there for most of their lives. Accordingly, if Jared moved away, he would still be classed as a local because that is what he is now. Kieran disputes this notion:

> F.G.: OK. Are you originally from Bordertown?
> Kieran: Am I originally from, yeah. Yeah.
> F.G.: So you're a local?
> Kieran: Yeah.
> F.G.: What does it take to be a local in Bordertown?
> Kieran: What does it take? . . . Shit. . . . I don't know. Um . . . Well, saying I'm a local, yeah I was born there, you know, but I live here (in Scotston) so
> F.G.: So you have to live in Bordertown to be a local?
> Kieran: I was, when I lived there yeah.
> F.G.: But not any more?
> Kieran: Um, obviously if I went back there, this summer or whatever, you know, I'd go and know a lot of people, so yeah, somebody could say 'There's a local', um. Yeah, before I started uni I'd say yeah I was a local, but I'm gradually moving away from the idea.
> F.G.: Why is that? Because you don't want to be part of that scene any more or is it a natural process?
> Kieran: Natural and also I'm, there's not a great deal in Bordertown. You know, I could never work there.

This implies a greater flexibility about identity categories than might otherwise be supposed. Kieran's family will still be considered locals, but though he will always belong, he surrenders his status as a local because he is no longer taking part in the continuous reaffirmation of community which everyone else is. He is physically and socially removed from Bordertown's core identity, although still heavily involved in the rugby club.

In fact, the very existence of such debates about what it means to be local in Bordertown implies that the identity of 'local' is flexible, and context-dependent. Therefore, although in some contexts an individual cannot be said to 'belong' because of their family or place of birth, or because they do not obey particular norms of behaviour (Elias, 1977: xxii), in others they may. This flexibility will be shown in the case of the Jesters in Chapter 7. Their marginalisation in Bordertown stems from their flouting of particular norms of behaviour. Yet, they are also classed as locals because they are accepted as sporting representatives of the town because of the performance of the town's ambiguous national identity.

A sense of locality is emphasised through the symbolic defence of the community. This used to be enshrined in regular traditional fights with the nearest local rival, where groups of young men would travel to the town for a night out. This behaviour has been observed in other communities as well, notably in Wight's examination of Cauldmoss (Wight, 1993: 30). When asked about this, the Bordertown boys claimed that the Hinterville lads 'asked for' trouble because they arrived in groups. However, another source commented that they arrived in groups because they were scared they would get beaten up if they arrived alone. The defence of the community is also played out through the representation of the community through sport.

Masculinity in Bordertown

One final point to make about Bordertown is that a masculine culture prevails. This was implied in the discussion above about violence and the defence of the community. Public social space in Bordertown is dominated by men, either in pubs or on the sporting fields.

Women tend not to go out into pubs without either a male chaperone or with a group of other women. This applies especially among married women, who do not tend to venture out except with their husbands. Younger or unmarried women tend to go out more often by themselves in small groups, whereas men seem to be able to go out singly or in groups. It is not common for groups of more than four or five of either sex to be out together, although sports teams seem to be exceptions to this rule. This makes it quite interesting in terms of how men react to large groups of fairly assertive women being out together, particularly the rugby team. One team member recalls the reactions of Bordertown when the team first started up:

> However, we do have a bit of a reputation for drinking and . . .things like that. . . . Um . . . what can you do? It was new to start off with. You were out enjoying yourself. We weren't causing any harm to anybody. All we were doing was enjoying ourselves. But I think that Bordertown just got a shock that there was these twenty, twenty five girls, like all of a sudden out on the town all of the time. A big group of girls, with some very big, some very small, loud. What harm were we doing? We were just enjoying ourselves. You know, but I think they got a bit of a shock, but now . . .
>
> (Bethany)

It seems to unsettle the social order in quite profound ways. A large group of women takes up a lot of physical room in the pub, and when they all seem to get along and know each other well, it can be unsettling for everyone else.

Part of the reason for women not going out as much is that going out alone is seen to symbolise sexual availability. Although it is acceptable, or indeed desirable, for a man to be sexually experienced, the same is not true of women. This attitude is articulated by both men and women, although actions by both genders are somewhat different in private. Women, when in private tend to give themselves more leeway, and conversations about sexual experiences, and the inadequacy of some men, were common. However, this had limitations, and much depended on the context of the discussion and the nature of the encounter with the man. For example, in conversation with a team mate about the issue of casual sex, it was made clear to me that casual sex as a concept was not openly acknowledged and that 'nice girls' (i.e. us) 'made love' rather than had sex. This links in with the team's perception of a former member as a slut because she had 'been with' several members of the men's team. However, the notion of getting a 'click' (having casual sex, usually with someone previously unknown) was accepted and part of the culture of touring and team nights out.

In terms of male/female interaction, it is more common for the men to make the first move, making the women the passive players in sexual pursuit. It is also more common for women to be less vocal or confident in mixed groups, for banter in such groups to be explicitly sexual and aimed at unsettling the woman. In addition to this, the experience of women approaching men seems also to be uncommon, though this is true of other places in Britain as well. Women are not expected to buy drinks for men, for example, and men can be quite offended when women offer. As a result, the Jesters represent a profound challenge to the existing social order, and as such, experience a considerable amount of, if not hostility, then at least attention.

Conclusion

In many ways, then, Bordertown is similar to other towns across Britain, saving its unusual national situation. The Jesters are a product of this context. A relatively small, tightly knit community which is based on kinship bonds and the flow of knowledge, Bordertown shares many of the same characteristics of other towns across Britain. A complex hierarchy of identities, including locals, incomers and outsiders, is acknowledged, but is also context

dependent, implying that the categories are not as rigid as they first appear. The sense of community in Bordertown is emphasised by their national ambiguity and the sense of distance experienced from the Scottish and English national communities. National identity is, therefore, one of the main supports of local identity in Bordertown.

Experiencing a small economic decline, in common with its surrounding region, Bordertown is a community which is also struggling with a sense of social decline. Young people do not tend to see much of future in the town, and out-migration looks set to continue. However, this has yet to make a significant impact on the community. There is also a strong sense of community loyalty, which results in people maintaining social bonds. One way this occurs is through a continuing involvement with the rugby club.

The rugby club is, therefore, representative of the town, and the Jesters representative of the women in the community. Used as a way of developing and reinforcing social bonds, the club also reinforces family involvement in the community, with many members becoming involved through family members. The economic profile of the club is split along gender lines, with many of the men living away from the town and returning to play, whereas the women tend to live and work within Bordertown itself.

The following chapter examines some of these issues in more detail, focusing specifically on the difficulty the Jesters face as women who are behaving in ways which are socially inappropriate in Bordertown. Bordertown is a specifically masculine and socially conservative context. Gender roles are strictly enforced. The ambiguity of their identities is explored, before the strategies they employ to try and manage the ambiguity are examined in the fifth chapter.

Chapter 4:
Women rugby players - "a different species"

> The ball goes out and a line-out is called. Both teams get ready, and I'm in my usual position, ready to be lifted. The coach walks off the pitch along our line. He pauses, slaps me lightly on the buttocks, 'Get that arse into the air and get that ball!' There is a collective intake of breath and a few comments from the opposing team. This represents a rare moment of on-field communication between teams - wasn't I upset by what had happened? Not really, I didn't think about it.

The incident related above was recorded in my field diary, and is one of the few incidences that I can clearly remember from playing rugby. It stands out because of the pause and silence occurring immediately after the slap, followed by the questioning of the other team. Interaction between teams on the pitch was rare, with conversation limited to insults or swearing. The immediate bonding that occurred between teams 'against' the coach highlighted to me the fact that gender was an important issue to these women, and something which they dealt with on a more or less continuous basis. Although I had been aware of this on some level all along, for some reason this incident symbolises to me the difficult gender and sexual situation they were in, and the feeling of 'Them' against 'Us' was changed from the sporting context, of team against team, to a gendered one of men against women.

This shift in context highlights the very tension which lies at the heart of the Jesters' ambiguous gender identity. On the one hand, as rugby players, they are established as being part of what has traditionally been seen as a masculine context. The fact that they are women is irrelevant in some ways, because of the fact that they play rugby. On the other hand, their gender makes it impossible for them to ever be integrated fully into it. It seems that they must sacrifice either their gender (as feminine) or their status as rugby players and their membership of this context. The Jesters, however, choose the third option, which is to attempt to juggle their apparent masculinity while maintaining their femininity. Thus they affirm their integration, whilst at the same time maintaining their distinction.

This chapter is concerned with establishing this position, caught between integration and exclusion. Sport, and particularly rugby, is established as a masculine context and as such, a

potentially hostile environment for female players. This involves the establishment of the identity of 'rugby player', and the different ways this identity is performed, both in terms of how a 'rugby player' plays rugby, and how a 'rugby player' is expected to perform off the pitch. The embodied experiences of individuals, male and female are central to this, placing the creation of gender on the use and perception of male and female bodies. The discussion of this identity establishes the Jesters as being integrated into the context of rugby, and into the context of the club. However, it becomes apparent that this integration is not without qualifications, particularly the loss of femininity and status on the part of the Jesters as a result of their integration. Attempts are made to marginalise them, and to make their belonging contingent and qualified. The ways in which the Jesters are marginalised, socially and spatially within the club are therefore examined, before a brief look at some of the ways in which the Jesters marginalise themselves or respond to the marginalisation. This is done through the problematisation of the Jesters' sexuality, and is shown through the anxiety which is shown by the Jesters themselves to control sexuality and appearance within the team.

In Chapter 1, sport is established as a context which is masculine and concerned with the development and perpetuation of gender norms as experienced through the human body. All sports are related to the construction of gender difference. Some sports give men and women the opportunity to play against and with each other as a purely social event (mixed touch rugby, mixed tennis doubles or mixed netball for example) but even in these sports, mixed competitions are not the norm, but are given as alternatives to single sex competition. In only two sports, equestrianism and korfball[1], do men and women compete together as equals.

Despite this, it is possible to identify a number of sports which have developed a sub-culture which is explicitly masculine and potentially hostile to women. Rugby is one of these sports which provides an example of the ways in which the physical demands of the sport are combined with a highly masculine sub-culture. Other examples are American Football (Sabo and Panepinto, 1990: 115), body building (Klein, 1993; Mansfield and McGinn, 1993), 'combat' sports such as wrestling and boxing ((Hill, 1999) and see also debates surrounding Jessica Hudson (Irwin, 2001)) and football (Caudwell, 1999; Russell, 1997). These sports all

[1]A sport developed in Holland, resembling basketball. It is played by teams of six men and six women.

have in common the focus on the body with its potential for violence, or actual acts of physical violence or confrontation against others. The human (male) body is depicted in such sports as active, aggressive, hard and muscular, an image which is then extended to all other male bodies (Segal, 1990 : 89). These sports are particularly important in this sense because of the importance of physical presence and force in the way they are performed. This is related to discussions of how masculinity is embodied, in the forceful, physical occupation of space and surroundings (Hargreaves, 1994: 145; Shilling, 1993: 110 - 111; Whitson, 1990: 23). They are constructed in opposition to the feminine, and so are resistant to women entering the cultures or playing the sports. By participating, women break down the myth that women are incapable of being physically active or aggressive, thereby making them more like men and removing one way of separating the genders.

Klein (1993: 17) argues that masculinity is, in effect, a negative identity, that it is characterised more by what it is not (that is, feminine) than by what it is. Both genders are constructed in relation to the other; one cannot exist without the opposition of the other in the current scheme of gender relations. However, in terms of how this is established and maintained in sports' cultures, it is possible to maintain that men are aggressive and active, where women are not. Men are seen to be performing acts which women cannot do. The difficulty is that when women do begin performing such acts, the difference between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and the corresponding physical and social superiority of masculinity is whittled away (Wheaton, 2000: 450; Whitson, 1990: 24).

In order to prevent this happening, women who enter such an arena are often marginalised. This takes place in a number of ways. One of the most effective is to deny women the physical space needed to take part. Another is the denial of women's ability to play sport. A third is through accusations of masculinity and lesbianism among women on the team. All three of these strategies were used against the Jesters.

However, a sense of acceptance exists alongside such rejection. At some levels, the Jesters are acknowledged to be a part of the club, and to be part of rugby despite the difficulty this poses in maintaining current gender norms and aspects of rugby sub-culture. Although this acceptance is always qualified, it exists nonetheless. Herein lies the difficulty in their situation - how are they able to extend their acceptance whilst at the same time, maintaining

their own sense of who they are? Ultimately this can only occur through the redefinition of what is means to be part of rugby.

The difficulty with this is that acceptance and integration, and exclusion often occur at the same time. Women are both accepted as being able to play rugby, and simultaneously having their ability denied or qualified. This makes the whole issue very problematic to divide neatly into two separate issues. As a result, the strategies and responses of the Jesters and others are looked at individually, and the conclusion assesses the ways in which they signify integration or maginalisation.

Occupying space in the club - becoming integrated

Integration and acceptance for the Jesters is an on-going process. Although they are considered to be an important part of the club, they still struggle for complete social integration. One of the ways this is displayed is in the ways in which they are allowed to occupy space in the club house. The way space is negotiated in this setting is illustrative of the social negotiations which are not so evident.

One of the first difficulties faced by the Jesters upon formation was gaining access to the club's facilities, particularly the changing rooms and showers. Like most sports clubs, the showers and changing rooms are communal, and when the Jesters were first established, the club had a bath which teams shared. Seen as unproblematic for male teams to use, the changing rooms represent one of the major sites of anxiety for players and officials alike. The debates about this area can also be extended to how the Jesters are able to occupy space in the clubhouse itself.

The changing area of sports teams is a problematic area. Usually closed to outsiders, it represents a space where teams are able to prepare for the match ahead, clothe themselves, meet with their team mates, and after the match, begin to unwind. If sport, as a public spectacle, becomes a performance with the pitch as the stage, the changing rooms represent the back stage, where outsiders are not welcome, and performers are afforded some privacy. In this sense, changing rooms resemble Goffman's 'back region' (1990: 116), where performers act out of character. Players get changed and shower, injuries are treated and tactics are discussed.

Because of their closed nature, and the fact that they are areas where people do wash and change, they have been kept segregated. However, this does not necessarily occur on the grounds of gender, but rather on the question of who belongs and who is an outsider. In the context of sport, however, this has usually been a division based on masculinity and femininity. The issue is the symbolic invasion of women into a male space, the back region of a performance of masculinity, and the resistance they encountered. Sport represents a stage for the performance of masculinity, where male bodies can be put on display. Women entering such an area undermines the performance and as such is something which is resisted.

As a result, the presence of women becomes problematic, particularly if they are in some way challenging particular gender roles and norms established and perpetuated through sport. The example of Lisa Olsen in 1990 is a case in point. Olsen, a female sportswriter, entered a changing room to interview a male player. Although part of a larger group of sportswriters, she was singled out for vicious sexual harassment which she later described as being 'mind rape' (Kane and Disch, 1993: 332). Kane and Disch write that:

> it is not objectionable for women to have access to the locker room as supporters of male performance. However, the presence of a woman who is a sportswriter (and thus a critic) disrupts the culture of the locker room, because in this terrain, relationships between women and men are defined in terms of subjugation and domination.
>
> (1993: 337)

If we analyse the incident in this light, and compare it to the Jesters situation and of women sports teams entering into the changing rooms of 'male' sport, we begin to see some interesting things emerging. In the Olsen case, the difficulty was not so much that she was in the locker room, but rather that she was in the locker room as a female critic of male performance. As such, she was in a position of dominance over the men in a situation which glorifies male dominance in a physical sense. In the case of the Jesters, the women are not criticising male performance, but rather are replicating it - that is they undercut male domination by proving that they, too, are able to perform similar activities to men. This means that the men are doing nothing special which removes their justification for the position of power they currently hold.

The first response of the club to the request by the Jesters for use of changing facilities was an attempt to keep the women out of the changing rooms. This is common to varying degrees across many rugby clubs. Initially in Bordertown, there was resistance to the women using the changing rooms at all, a position which was scaled down to their being unable to train on the same nights as the senior men, but instead being encouraged to train on the same nights as the boys. Although this means they are able to train, they are denied access to the showers on these nights in the interests of propriety. This is understandable, but what is not altogether clear is why training cannot be organised at different times to the boys so that the male and female teams are not needing to use the showers at the same time.

In Bordertown, the symbolic issue was the use of the bath in the club. As there were very few, if any showers, at this time, and it was assumed that women would not use the bath, women were discouraged from playing rugby at all:

> You know when I, when we first started we got 'Oh, it's a man's game.' We didn't have the bus and that then, and we didn't , well we had a few showers but it was still the bath . . . but we don't want anything else! We don't want anything different! We don't want special treatment. We want to go out and train, play the game and just be treated like the men. We didn't want proper showers, we could have gone home and had a shower. It didn't matter to us! You know? And then they were saying, oh we cannot have mixed training, men cannae train on the same night as women, and we said, we'll train on the Monday, Wednesday . . .
>
> (Trish)

The interesting thing about this is that the women and the men in the club were working on different levels. The men used the issues about the changing area as a way of keeping the women out of rugby entirely, arguing that the practicalities were simply impossible to overcome. The women, on the other hand, simply wanted to play rugby and were not really looking to change anything. The issues about the changing rooms were things which could be avoided, and the club now allows the team access to changing facilities and showers on the same basis as male teams on game days, although not for training. This is not the case for other clubs, who do not allow their women's teams access to changing facilities or hot water. This is a symbolic action, of keeping women out of a male space.

The fact that the Jesters now have access to changing facilities, and the disappearance of the bath, means that on some levels, the Jesters have been integrated into the club, a fact which they are appreciative of:

> We would be nothing without the club. There's some people don't get their buses, their food or anything. It's all up to the girls. So I think they've been supportive. . . . [I]n some ways we're part of the club, but in some ways I think we are still a bit . . . separate. I think we are mostly part of the club. We get all their buses and we get invited to things, and we're never sort of left out of things so I think we are. . . [I]t's like the lads tend to get more than us because they're the men . . . they go and get their bait on a Thursday night and stuff like that and we all . . . . . They're always going to have a team, whereas we sometimes struggle. So that's the reason.
>
> (Wendy)

> When we first started . . . two or three very small-minded men [didn't support us], still a little bit small minded, but they've forgotten about it now. They realise they're outnumbered. . . there was a case when they once were going to scrap our buses, because of the expenses and basically the Executive said "No way. You know, you're not doing that." I don't think some of the girls realise how lucky they are . . . you go to clubs, we went to some where the girls got a . . . pitch which was like a bog. It was terrible. They were allowed in the club rooms to get changed but they weren't allowed any hot water, we had to have cold showers. We weren't allowed in the club rooms for a drink. We had to go to the pub. Now when you look at things like that . . . I think we're damn lucky.
>
> (Bethany)

The Jesters now enjoy the support of the club on a financial level, and have managed to gain access to facilities which allow them to participate more fully in the club. This is also reflected in Wendy's comment that "we get invited to things", meaning that the Jesters are encouraged to participate in the social life of the club as well as playing for it. Male players also accept the Jesters as being an important part of the social life of the club, and appreciate the support some of the women give the men's teams. Occasionally, the Jesters attend a men's match to support Bordertown, they are often involved in club fundraising as well as working behind the bar or on committees. Although these may be interpreted as being 'traditional' female roles in rugby clubs, reflecting a subordinate position (Dunning, 1986:

85), the Jesters carry on these roles recognising an opportunity to further integrate the team with the club.

This integration is also reflected in the ways the team operates at club socials. In these contexts, where male and female players are present as well as other people from Bordertown, the Jesters' integration is signified by their relative independence when compared to other women at the club. These women tend to dress differently from most of the women who play rugby, typifying 'femininity' in their dress, with short skirts, long hair and make-up. This is contrasted with the women who play rugby who tend to dress slightly less revealingly - for them being at the rugby club is simply part of every day life and their relationship with the men's team is different. They are not necessarily there to look for potential partners. This results in certain tensions between the Jesters and other women at the club:

> I think they don't like it that we speak to the men. . . not that we're going to steal them or anything but . . .if they was that interested in their men's life they would go and watch them play rugby, wouldn't they?
>
> (Bethany)

The Jesters therefore have a different relationship with the men - they are able to discuss a common interest with them on level terms, something the other women cannot do. The other women are there either with their boyfriends, or looking at male players.

One male player, when discussing his recent ex-girlfriend said that she had come to the club but that she was constantly at his side, hanging on to his arm. When I asked whether that annoyed him, he commented that he had liked it, that she knew no-one else in the room and so was forced to stay with him for the night. This was obviously not something that women who played rugby would have to do, particularly if they were in the same club, as they would know enough other people to be able to go and talk to them. For this reason, perhaps, this player was not keen on dating a female player. His girlfriend becomes reduced to an object or accessory, boosting his standing with other players and not attempting to form and independent identity within the club of her own.

The rugby playing women and non-rugby playing women also use space differently in the club. The Jesters tend to cluster together, because they know each other. There is little

mingling of sexes. However, because the other women are there with men, they tend to be a part of larger mixed groups. Interaction between the Jesters and the rest of the club takes place on an individual level, rather than as groups. Individual Jesters know individual male players to talk to, but will not consider going over to talk to them as a group. In part, this is because there is often very little contact between the Jesters and the men's teams. Training on different nights, and the fact that many of the men live away from Bordertown, means that contact will be limited.

However, the gap, taken for granted by the players, seemed to me to be abnormally large. I attended a New Year's disco at the club with three teammates. One other player was there, but came with a different group. Although the rest of the women I was with had been playing for the club for a longer time than I had, and also lived in the local area, I knew more people there and was prepared to talk to more people that I did not know than they were. Most of the men interviewed did not know many of the women's team by name, although they knew their faces. This implies that the Jesters have a marginal part in the club, despite protests to the contrary. Although some women are very much part of the club, being involved with men's rugby as well, most of the women do not seem to feel as if they have a right to be there socially, as if unsure of the welcome they would get. This suggests that the integration of the Jesters is not entirely complete. They are still viewed with some ambivalence. One of the main ways this ambivalence is played out is through the definition of the identity of 'rugby player', which symbolises for the Jesters the clash of masculine and feminine identities.

Being a 'proper' rugby player - social dimensions

The identity of a rugby player has two specific aspects - the social and the physical. Although it is possible for the Jesters to be integrated into this identity on a social level by exhibiting similar behaviour to those of the men off the pitch, the physical dimension presents a greater challenge to both the Jesters and others.

Socially, it is possible that the Jesters can gain acceptance and be integrated. Indeed, evidence suggests that this has happened and that in some contexts they perceive themselves to be, and are perceived by others, as rugby players. Simply by showing themselves willing to take part in the game, it is possible for women to redefine who and what a 'proper' rugby player is. They consider themselves to be rugby players, and as a

result, the criticisms of this nature are not as big a problem as some other attempts to marginalise them:

> [W]e are rugby players. We're . . . part of the team, we play rugby and we're in the second division. I'd say, yeah we are. We're not just playing at it, we're being it. We're part of a league and we've won trophies and things, yeah, yeah we are.
>
> (Trish)

Trish, like the rest of the Jesters, is 'being it'. Male criticisms do not bother them. They are playing a sport in the same way as men. As a result, their identities as rugby players are assured within the context of the team at least. During one of my seasons there, they were acknowledged as such by the rest of the club, being the only team to win a competition and bring home a trophy that year. Success, it would appear, may bring acceptance.

In some contexts they are also seen as rugby players by male players. This is particularly true when men consider the women's behaviour off the pitch, where the Jesters visibly act out of women's conventional roles, and take on the role of rugby players. In asserting their identity as rugby players, the Jesters are also asserting their right to step outside the bounds of gendered behaviour in Bordertown, enabling them to 'act up' in ways that other women are not allowed to. However, in doing this, they pay a heavy price in terms of how they are seen by the rest of Bordertown society. Male rugby players, in continuing their denial of the female rugby player identity, are loud in their criticisms of such behaviour. And the Jesters take measures to control it, feeling the need to defend the little freedom they have gained. This said, the problems arise because the women are behaving appropriately as rugby players, which contradicts their identities as women.

A large part of rugby sub-culture involves the performance of a particularly loud and boisterous identity in public. The Jesters, feeling themselves to be part of this sub-culture act accordingly, and in so doing, tend to attract attention and distinguish themselves from other women:

> I think they probably have more fun around their friends or that, you know, but it, well they're more . . . manly than other women . . . . They're rugby players, they tend to do similar things to men off the pitch, the drinking and the

> singing, things like that. Whereas I don't think you'd find many groups of, you know, lady shoppers, singing or drinking pints or whatever. Well, you might get it, I don't know if there's such a thing as a group of lady shoppers.
>
> (Michael)

Michael acknowledges a difference between women who play rugby and other women (the "lady shoppers"). It is assumed that the women who play rugby will behave like rugby players. In fact, he assumes that they will, because they are rugby players. However, this also means that for Michael, the Jesters behave like men. They are therefore separated from the category of 'normal' women, in that they are "manly".

This perception is related to the consumption of copious amounts of alcohol, the occupation of large amounts of public space and attention and the degradation of peers and strangers alike (Dunning, 1986: 83), all behaviours which are typical of groups of rugby players, regarded by outsiders as unpleasant to be around at the least, and threatening at most. Within rugby circles, there are accepted limits of behaviour (not immediately obvious to the outside eye). However, women and men not perceived to be 'normal', a category which usually excludes homosexual men, men who are not 'masculine' enough or men of a different race or ethnicity (Long *et al.*, 1997), are accepted targets. It is little surprise, then, when women who play rugby begin to act like rugby players off the pitch that they attract comment and criticism.

Kieran was particularly vocal about his reservations, especially his disapproval of the women wanting to be seen as 'different' because they play rugby. He seems to see this as the women attempting to gain social advantage because of their participation in rugby:

> And . . . some of them are really nice. . . But there's a couple on the team, not mentioning any names, who are pretty loud and, you know, want to be noticed as different because they play rugby and what have you. Want, you know, want to stand out. . . some of them make a fool of themselves. . . trying to down pints of beer all the time. . . there's a few down in Bordertown who I think are pretty overboard, pretty boisterous all the time in the clubhouse, spilling beer on the chairs and what have you . . . that's the trouble that I've seen anyways.
>
> (Kieran)

The culture surrounding rugby embraces some of the behaviours described above, but only in relation to men performing them. Although Kieran can almost bring himself to talk about women playing rugby, he cannot accept that they may behave like 'rugby players' after the game. In addition to this, he thinks that in behaving the way they do, they make 'fools' of themselves, not allowing people to take them seriously on the pitch because of their behaviour off it. Again, the difficulty here is not his acceptance of them as rugby players. It is the fact that as rugby players, they cannot also be women.

The Jesters themselves are aware of the extreme ambivalence and disapproval they attract. On the one hand, they represent a very independent group in Bordertown, making them an attractive group to other women in Bordertown, meaning that they tend to attract some younger women to their group. The identity of 'rugby player' carries with it an ability to step outside the norms of feminine behaviour and gain a little more freedom. But this said, the Jesters are not prepared to surrender their right to behave like this, because they feel they have earned it by playing rugby, despite the ambivalence they are aware of:

> What can you do? It was new to start off with. You were out enjoying yourself. We weren't causing any harm to anybody. All we were doing was enjoying ourselves. But I think that Bordertown just got a shock that there was these twenty, twenty five girls, like all of a sudden out on the town all of the time. A big group of girls, with some very big, some very small, loud. What harm were we doing? We were just enjoying ourselves. You know, but I think they got a bit of a shock . . .
>
> (Bethany)

Being seen as different is one thing which attracts some women to play rugby. However, if people become involved simply to be able to say that they are different, they very rarely continue to play. But they continue to feed on the identity of being a rugby player:

> They come a couple of times to training, maybe, if we're lucky, play a game, but they still call themselves, you know, Bordertown rugby players. And we've had a few of them over the years, you know, coming in, even getting the tops, you know the Bordertown Womens' Ladies', and you see them with the top on and you're like 'You don't play!'
>
> (Trish)

This is particularly galling to team members because they feel that they have earned the right to behave raucously in pubs because they are rugby players. The other women are licensed to do this because they are associated with the team, yet are not members of the group. They wear the uniform of the team out and about Bordertown, something that none of the team members themselves do, fearing to attract more attention to themselves. This causes some exasperation and frustration among team members, as they make efforts to blend in and not be noticed as rugby players. If they do get noticed, then it is because they are with a large group rather than because they are wearing uniforms which identify them. Girls wishing to be part of the team, or who are playing only to be noticed, will go out of their way to be noticed. It is possible that these are the women being referred to by Kieran when he speaks of them wanting to be noticed for being different. In truth, however, most of the players simply want to be ignored to get on with their sport.

As a result of this ambivalence, however, some of the players have rejected even the level of integration offered by the club. They feel marginalised and not fully accepted because of the problems some men face in accepting them as 'proper' rugby players. All of the Jesters are aware of their marginal relationship with the club, but few of them seem to be prepared to take steps to rectify it, claiming that their position is hampered by the fact that they will always be secondary to that of the men's teams:

> We're like second-class citizens, really . . . I think until we can prove ourselves a team worth supporting . . . Until we start winning things or . . . I mean we were . . . second or third team from top of the League, and we still got no support from them. . . . [I]f we're going to be part of the club, we have to be treated as part of the club. . . .Because it's like the old boy network. It is when you look at it here . . . I think it would be a lot different if there was younger people on the committee.
>
> (Ciara)

> [T]hey give us the bus to go away and yes because they like have a women's team. And no, because you've got some very sexist men there. The older generation. . . .They're not so keen. They think the women should be at home, things like that and they don't think women should be able to playing rugby. But they're the older ones. The younger ones, like the lads don't have a problem with it, and the club

> . . . If they didn't want us there, they would have kicked us out by now.
>
> (Belinda)

Because the club's main focus is on the men's teams, most of the resources get spent on them. They are also the main revenue raisers of the club. However, the women resent their position, recognising that it is because they are women more than anything else. They tend to go their own way rather than fall in with the club. In part this is a reaction to the marginalisation they felt when they first started up. Because they were materially separated from the club, and because of the continued lack of integration they feel from the rest of the club members, they do not make the necessary steps to become fully integrated. This begins to indicate the difficulty faced by the Jesters. Although they are accepted as being rugby players, they are accepted only with qualifications. In order to present one identity, they must accept the diminishing of their femininity, and in so doing, face social censure and disapproval.

A big part of this separation and ambivalence occurs because of the physical dimension of being a rugby player. As Kieran and Michael made clear above, their difficulty is not with accepting the Jesters as rugby players. Rather it the problem is accepting the Jesters to be both rugby players and women, particularly as the social and physical demands of each role appear to be so irreconcilable. The physical performance of playing rugby is such that the Jesters feel it impossible to overcome social ambivalence about them.

Being a 'proper' rugby player - physical dimensions

One of the main sticking points for people accepting women playing rugby is the physicality of the game. The nature of the game has resulted in a strong sense of what it takes physically and mentally to play it. It is also assumed that women do not possess these physical and mental qualities, typified in the 'proper' rugby player. One of the interesting things about this 'person' is that although he (used deliberately) is always male, his physical characteristics are quite diverse. Indeed, one of the attractive things about rugby is the wide range of physical types which can be visible on the pitch. In theory, a man will always find a position which suits both his personality and his physical capabilities:

> I think that the best thing about rugby is the scope. . . I think you can have any physique, any character and you'll

> manage to get a game somewhere. You know you find a position that's suited to you, and just sort of take it from there. . . .That's . . . the joy of the game really. The fact that anyone, from any walk of life as well, you know private school, state school, doesn't matter, you're all there to enjoy yourself.
>
> (Michael)

If this flexibility is possible for men, then it is possible that it could be extended to women as well. This, however, does not seem to be the case. Although men of all sizes and shapes can fulfill the physical role of the rugby player, there is resistance to the idea that women may be able to do so as well. Many reactions about female rugby players centre around their physicality, and the inadequacy of this:

> But I mean, well, never, it's a, it's a different game. Women aren't, it's, physically they're a different species so, no but, no but you know what I mean!
>
> (Michael)

One interesting thing about this is Michael's discomfort and incoherence in stating his views about women's rugby. Out of all of the interviews, Michael's views are among the strongest recorded regarding the separation of women's rugby from men, yet he is reluctant to make this point too explicitly for fear of possible offence. He is torn, here, between his view that women should not, and in fact do not, play rugby ("it's a different game") and his desire not to offend. He sees women as being incapable of playing 'real' rugby because they are physically different. If we assume that he does not mean that women are *literally* a different species (as I think we must), we can only assume that he believes that men and women are so different that even if they happen to participate in an activity which is identical in rules and practices, they still are not doing the same thing.

Part of this is the fact that women's rugby is not played to the same standard of fitness or skill that is evident in men's rugby, which makes it a less entertaining game to watch. However, a larger part of it is the general belief that women cannot play rugby and are constantly being measured up to the masculine sporting or rugby-playing body and found wanting.

The comparison between male and female rugby players and the corresponding assumption that women can't play rugby is made continuously. Men, upon finding out that a woman

plays rugby, ask about what position she plays. They then tend to deny that she is able to adequately fulfill the demands of the role, particularly if she plays in the forwards. The forwards' main role used to be most of the physical work on the pitch, the rucking and mauling, the scrums, pushing the ball forwards. As a result, they are characterised as being the 'hard' or aggressive players on the pitch, in contrast to the backs who are often characterised as 'girls' or 'fairies'.

Descriptions of 'typical' rugby players are based on physical characteristics. Below are descriptions of 'typical' players, both forwards and backs, drawn from several different interviews:

> A typical forward, you'd think about six foot something, big broad shoulders, no hair, drinking cans of beer before the game! A 17 stone prop, with cauliflower ears, a squint nose and a few scar marks on their back. Well, maybe thirty year ago . . . Today, they're very fit, they are carrying weight, but it's muscle. And they're versatile. The typical second row thirty year ago was there for line outs and what have you. Nowadays they have to be mobile, tackling, has to be a good ball handler.

> The backs . . .tall and skinny, gelled hair, longer [than the forwards']. Not expecting any contact or anything. . . . In terms of size, quite a lot bigger than what they used to be. They get involved in what you would call forward activities . . . in rucks and mauls, supporting the tackled man and, so therefore they're, they're quite a bit bigger than what they used to be. Just overall, good rugby players, muscular, fitter with a few skills.

Such descriptions do not leave a great deal of room for women to have a place. Although it might be possible to imagine a woman playing in the backs, it is unlikely that she would be able to command the skill needed to gain the respect for her playing. And for the forward players among the women, it is almost impossible. Male props, hookers and second-rows (positions which are responsible for much of the physical work on the pitch) are pointed out. The statement is then made that 'You're not big enough!', implying that if it came to a contest between a female player and a male one, the female simply could not compete. This comparison misses the point that women do not usually claim to be able to compete with men in terms of physical strength, power and speed, and that in terms of who they are

playing against, although a ten stone woman cannot hope to compete consistently against a fourteen stone man, she is more than capable of competing against a twelve stone woman. But the comparison is still made to men.

This comparison is made even by men who are supportive of the women's team. One coach, although trying to make the point that gender was unimportant, told the players that "You're not women! You're rugby players!" It is difficult to imagine a coach saying to a men's team "You're not men! You're rugby players!" because being men and rugby players are not contradictory. For women, the two identities cancel each other out.

Occasionally, male players become confrontational when making these points. While on tour, at a rugby tournament, a man approached me at the bar, established that I did play rugby, then told me that he did not approve of women playing rugby. When asked why not, he said "It's a man's game". This exchange, though not unusual, was somewhat surprising in that it came in the context of a rugby tournament, where usually the atmosphere is, if not supportive, then at least neutral. To have been approached by someone whose only object seemed to be to isolate or to express an opinion which was obviously offensive or hostile, is indicative of the general disapproval of women playing rugby across the board.

The designation of rugby as a 'man's game' is also common, but has its basis in the physical characteristics being described. Women are inadequate, and as a result, they cannot be accepted as rugby players, despite their performance of such roles.

Even when women players are complimented, the compliment is qualified by the assumption that women should not play rugby. For example, after one game, I was approached by one of the male props. During the game I had made a fairly big tackle on a player who then did not get up. The tackle was fair, but quite hard and unpleasant. He walked up to me, and said "I don't approve of women playing rugby. But that was one of the biggest tackles I've seen this season." In this statement, he both denies the possibility of women playing rugby, but also affirms it. If a woman proves herself capable of showing the same physicality and aggression as a male player, then she can be judged on the same criteria to men. But it is still the same criteria, with male bodies and male players being the norm. Women are not judged on their own merits, but are constantly compared to men.

This discussion has concentrated on perceptions of the ability of women to physically carry out the demands of rugby. Compared to men, and if competing with men, it seems that there is little chance of women ever being able to be accepted as rugby players. But the ambivalence goes further. The way others look at the Jesters centres, not only on their physical capabilities, but also on their physical attractiveness. Although male rugby players are judged by their appearance, the appearance of scarring, bruising and "cauliflower ears" does not necessarily impact on a man's social standing. However, the physical cost of rugby may well affect a woman's. In addition to this, the appearance of women rugby players is often linked to assertions about their gender identity, and lack of femininity, as well as to their sexuality. It is at this level that we can see the most clear indications of the Jesters' lack of integration, and extreme examples of their marginalisation. It is also these issues which provoke the clearest examples of how the Jesters manage this difficult identity, but also the issues which result in the most contradictory messages about how the Jesters see themselves.

Appearance and gender

I would like now to return to the incident described at the start of the chapter. This incident highlighted gender as an important concern of not only the Jesters, but other women's teams as well. Although playing a 'man's game', they were aware of themselves and their opponents as women, and were therefore aware both of their uneasy social position as women, and of the potential sexual tensions which might arise as a result of their behaviour. This is one of the reasons for the reaction which the coach's innocent action provoked.

It is impossible to prevent women from playing rugby. Attacks upon their legitimacy are constant, but do not actually cause a huge amount of distress for women players. Another tactic is to call into question the women's gender and sexual status. This has been interpreted as a conscious strategy to continue to marginalise women, and also men who do not fit the heterosexual masculinity emphasised by society, thereby maintaining current gender norms. As such, it is analysed as a response to a threat (Caudwell, 1999: 391; Hargreaves, 1994: 261; Naess, 2001: 135). This is done through the collapse of gender into sexuality, and is a strategy which is particularly effective in the case of the Jesters. In part this is because of the culture in Bordertown which allows men to be relatively autonomous, whereas women are more constrained in their behaviour in public. The Jesters, in behaving like the rugby players they see themselves as being, put themselves outside these norms of

behaviour, and as such, attract more censure than might have been the case in larger towns. This has been discussed above.

Although this is a conscious strategy on the part of some male players, I believe it occurs not because they feel threatened, but rather because they feel secure in their sense of gender and sexuality. Because of this security, they feel able to assert their control over how the Jesters are seen - as masculine, as lesbian, but still ultimately subject to the male sexual gaze. As such, the Jesters' bodies are the subject of close scrutiny, but it is scrutiny which tends to affirm the observers' prior assessment. It is assumed that women who play rugby are masculine and that they are different from other women. Although the truth is somewhat different, this is what people see. As a result of this scrutiny, the Jesters are very body-conscious, careful of their appearance and their behaviour, particularly that which may provoke accusations of further masculinisation, specifically lesbianism. This will be further discussed below, but now my focus remains on how the Jesters' bodies are interpreted as masculine in appearance as well as behaviour.

A consistent theme running through the analyses of femininity and gender identities is the different ways men and women inhabit their bodies. Masculine bodies are active, used as ways of achieving goals through the physical occupation of space, compared to the relatively passive and decorative feminine body (Shilling, 1993: 110 - 111). This is reflected in the concentration on women rugby players' bodies and the possible consequences of the attractiveness and desirability. Most of the concerns raised about women's rugby took the form of concern about the possible effects it has on how a player may end up looking. This was a concern expressed entirely by male players. The Jesters were more concerned about the apparent masculinisation of their gender identity because of the way their bodies were being used.

The possibility of physical injury is always present in rugby, but it is the possibility of facial scarring which seems to disconcert most. The descriptions of the male players who have broken noses and cauliflower ears give the impression that such disfigurement is normal. It is different when it is applied to women though. Appearance is felt to be more important to a woman than to a man, meaning that the potential consequences of injury for women were greater:

> I used to think well why do women want to play rugby when you could get a a bad facial injury or something like that, you know? . . . I'll still say to you . . . a man can get a squint nose like mine and it's not a problem but, I mean, on a girl it's probably, it's not the best things ever. And it could happen easily.
>
> (Liam)

It is evident that Liam regards the possibility of facial injury as being one of the main problems with women playing rugby. Although it is acceptable for a man to have a broken nose, for a woman the consequences are more serious, as it is assumed that women must invest a higher value in their physical appearance than do men. Another dimension of this attitude is expressed by Kieran. When speaking of a hypothetical woman who played rugby, he claimed that knowing this about her would diminish her attractiveness in his eyes:

> Because she could probably, chances are the next week she could turn up with a black eye, and everybody would be looking at me thinking 'you gave her a black eye'.
>
> (Kieran)

Although this was said partly as a joke, it also reflects his concern about the different ways that facial injuries on men and women are interpreted. It is easier to imagine socially acceptable contexts in which a man would get a black eye, such as through playing sport or fighting. For a woman to get a black eye, the first reaction of many is to assume that she was injured at the hands of a man. This potentially puts the man involved with the woman into a difficult situation as he may become seen as a man who strikes women, which in turn threatens his own sense of masculinity (Connell, 1995: 100).

This is also reflected in the reactions women get if they have a visible injury sustained while playing rugby. Bruising, particularly over the legs and arms is common, and in public places, such as gym changing rooms, strangers often feel entitled to ask how the injuries were sustained. A common assumption is that they are skiing injuries. However, bruising to the face in the form of a cut lip, or black eye attracts no comments or questions, but rather surreptitious stares and the avoidance of eye contact. When I sustained an injury like that, I was conscious of a sense of shame and a desire to hide my face in a way I never experienced with other injuries. The reason for this is the discomfort I felt with the label I felt was being affixed, that of an abused or helpless victim.

Despite these occasional difficulties, the Jesters as a whole are not worried about their physical appearance. It seems that the men do this worrying for them (Klein, 1993: 190)! However, the Jesters do worry that their appearance is consistently interpreted in terms of their participation in rugby. Because of the association between rugby and masculinity, their bodies are always assumed to be masculine, as is their appearance. This occurs despite individual players' appearance, dress or behaviour.

There is considerable hesitation when it comes to men describing a typical woman rugby player. Although this may have been because I am a player who was interviewing them, another part stems from the ambiguity surrounding female players. The common perception of women rugby players is that they are physically androgynous, neither male nor female:

> They are big girls, fattish, plump, solid, you know, they're built, similar sort of build I would expect [to the men], to be honest. I wouldn't, well, not as, well maybe not as . . . muscular because I don't think women would go out of their way to make themselves . . . maybe some of them do. Short hair. I don't know about their fitness because I don't really see a lot of them play. . . . But . . . they all seem to be about the same size. I mean you never have . . . Christ . . . You can't really tell looking at a woman rugby player what position she plays.

This is a description of women rugby players taken from a combination of interviews. The interesting thing about this description is the emphasis on size. Despite the variation identifiable between men's positions, the women are all characterised as being 'big'. Some men have difficulty telling the positions of women apart on the field. In only one interview, with a man who was explicitly supportive of women playing, did he comment on the variation possible among the players. All others characterised the women as being big with short hair. Part of this is the fact that most of the men interviewed did not take an interest in women's rugby and so did not make an effort to watch it. However, all of the men interviewed were familiar with the Jesters and so were aware that some of the women were big, and some small.

The effect of such descriptions is to eliminate the Jesters' gender identity. They are no longer physically recognised as women. The power of such a stereotype is displayed by Bethany, who comments that whatever she wears, she is still perceived as being masculine:

> My friend . . . we were talking about clothes or something and she goes 'And obviously you wear trackies all the time, because'. . . you're sporty ' she says, 'I wear this because I'm not sporty.' And I thought to myself, I'm sick of people thinking that I'm this sports freak, because if I could fit into my bloody jeans I'd wear them! You know what I mean? . . . but I walk down the street and I have denim skirts on . . . I wear skirts a lot of the time. If I'm lounging about in the house, or I'm going to get waxed, I'm just going to hoy on my tracksuit bottoms aren't I? So, she was a good mate of mine, and I was a bit 'Oh God, does everybody think that I dress like a man?' You know? . . . So . . . then I do feel different. I . . . wish people wouldn't think of me like that.
>
> (Bethany)

The conflict here between how Bethany actually feels and how she is perceived by others goes to the root of the difficulty women rugby players face. Although they see themselves as being feminine, others do not. Bethany does not see herself as being butch, masculine or 'hard'. In fact, she sees herself as being quite feminine. She is constantly confronted with other people's expectations of her to be masculine because she plays rugby. This occurs whatever she is wearing, indicating the power of the stereotype over her ability to define how she sees herself. Her qualification of the question regarding how she felt about herself is interesting. By claiming that she did not feel different from others, but that others felt different from her indicates how strong a perception of her other people have, and how distant that perception is from her own sense of self. This again is true of many of the other Jesters.

Because of these contradictions and the way that they are perceived, the Jesters remained physically excluded from the identity of rugby player. They cannot change their basic femininity or 'femaleness', which results in their being unable to compete with men or enlarge the definition of what it means to be a rugby player. However, because they are also accepted as rugby players, they must also relinquish their femininity and accept the characterisation as being physically masculine. A further complication for the Jesters is the issue of sexuality which is frequently associated with gender identity.

Sexuality in the Jesters - a fraught issue

The debates over appearance are also related to the perception of the women's sexuality. Along with the masculinisation of women who play rugby is their loss of control over the way they are perceived sexually. Sexuality and rugby are very strongly related in the discourse surrounding rugby. The songs sung by teams of both sexes are often explicitly sexual, and for many of the male songs, are attacks either on women or on the sexual inadequacy of men. This is usually done in an ironic sense, as rugby is a celebration of a masculinity which is specifically heterosexual. Homosexuality is also not discussed because of the need to keep the changing rooms and the field of play an asexual environment. As a game, rugby promotes the intimate physical contact of players but there exists a strong social prejudice against homosexuality. Discussions of homosexuality, or any type of sexuality, in anything other than a puerile, ironic or contemptuous sense are impossible. One possible reason for this is the demands of rugby, involving physical intimacy, which require a way of opening the issue of sexuality and sensuality in a safe way. This does not allow discussion, and instead implicitly and explicitly rejects sex, intimacy and sexuality as subjects needing consideration. The songs, jokes and prevailing heterosexual culture act as ways of airing the issue without delving too deeply into it.

As a group, the Jesters are very conscious of their bodies and appearance, and their sensuality and sexuality. They are constantly moving between using their bodies for rugby and using them as an expression of something else. Many of the debates around women's rugby centre on the women's bodies as sites of sexual allure and desirability, a woman's attractiveness and examples of how a woman should behave.

The anxiety surrounding this stems from similar situations for both men and women. Although gender cannot be reduced to a discussion of sexuality, frequently sexual preferences are used as a way of reading a person's gender. Thus, a man who is homosexual can be defined as being effeminate, and therefore contrary to rugby's gender code, and a woman who is lesbian is given a masculine gender. Women who play rugby are often seen as being masculine and the main way that this is expressed (by others) is through accusations of lesbianism.

The issues of sexuality and gender are linked in the minds of society because of the social disapproval of women behaving like that and using their bodies in such a way. As a result, sexuality, physicality and gender are all combined in many of these discourses. One of the main ways that this is done is through the use of the term 'butch' to describe women rugby player's bodies. This term has arisen out of an historical context which associated lesbianism with masculinity (Halberstam, 1998: 119; Hargreaves, 1994: 261). Within the context of lesbian subculture, Halberstam argues that 'butches' tend to see themselves as being something "other than a woman-identified woman" (Halberstam, 1998: 120). That is, as women who do not consider themselves to be women, and who may or may not be attracted to other women. In this sense, the concept of 'butch' is not related to sexuality, but is rather a term relating to a person's gender identity. In the context of rugby and Bordertown, however, this type of label is rejected by the women themselves although it is applied to some team members. 'Butch' becomes a term used to describe masculine behaviour in a woman, and carries connotations of masculine appearance and lesbian sexuality.

In addition to this, the whole idea of lesbian sexuality might, in itself, be threatening. It implies the redundancy of men, and the image of the aggressive, predatory lesbian has stalked women's sports since at least the turn of the twentieth century (Cahn, 1994: 165), along with the implication of heterosexual failure, the fear that "[t]he amazonian athlete might not only be unattractive but unattracted to men - she might prefer women." (Cahn, 1994: 165)

Embedded in this type of analysis is the assumption that women must look attractive to men (as seen in the discussion above), and also be available to men. But inherent in such an analysis is the assumption that this is somehow threatening to men, and as a result, women are labelled as lesbians in response to some type of threat, either sexual or social. Thus women who play rugby, a masculine pastime, might be masculine in other ways, including sexuality. However, this might manifest itself in women directing their attentions towards men only as a means of satisfying their own sexual needs. This definitely reverses many of the social conditions and expectations in rugby, where women are often simply seen as sexual objects, there for men's sexual gratification. The idea that men may perform the same role for women's teams is not particularly welcomed by men involved.

However, evidence tends to suggest that in the context of rugby in Bordertown, lesbianism is not necessarily seen as being a threat to the dominance of heterosexual masculinity. Rather, the men involved are so confident in their position and their sexuality that they are able to objectify both the women involved and lesbianism for their own gratification. Thus, the issue of lesbianism for the Jesters is something which both sexualises them and is used as a further way of marginalising and controlling them.

For some players, this does not represent a problem, as it corresponds to their sexual identity. In fact, for some women, playing rugby is probably one way of meeting women who share this identity, as has been documented in other sports (Cahn, 1994: 187; Caudwell, 1999: 391). However, in the context of Bordertown, and the wider social context, lesbianism has been used both to scare women away from sport and to control the behaviour of those women in it.

When asked about what they did not like about rugby, six of the seven Jesters interviewed stated specifically that they did not like the lesbian image they were given. There was a variety of reasons for this, ranging from the awareness that it represented a way of controlling their image, to the fact that it did not represent how they saw themselves:

> The only thing I dinnae like is all the . . . lesbians in the game . . . You want to see them at the Internationals. It's full of lesbians. I dinnae like that cause you're playing rugby, which is a man's sport, you get classed . . . as being the same . . . and I don't think that's very right. Just because you want to play a game, you're classed as being a lesbian because its a man's sport. . . .Think you're all hard and butch and that . . . Well . . .(*looking down at herself*) I wouldn't say I'm very butch like! . . .You're not classed a lady or a woman when you play rugby. You'll know!
>
> (Emily)

Emily ties her dislike of lesbianism in with a consciousness that it is not necessarily the sexuality that is the problem. Rather, it is the fact that lesbianism is associated with masculinity, and it is this which they are trying to deny. Because of this assumption, the women dislike the tag of lesbianism because they recognise it as being a way of controlling their behaviour, or punishing them for becoming involved in a 'man's sport'. However, it is the masculinity issue which is the true problem for most of the women:

> Lesbian' That's the normal one! (*Laughter*) . . .I think it's because . . . it's always been a man's sport. It's just now that women are playing so they think 'Trouble!' 'Lesbian!' (*Laughter*)
>
> (Wendy)

This again implies that the labelling of 'lesbian' is an act of control rather than something which people really believe. A threatening identity, it is one which all of the women are eager to distance themselves from. It is also one which may cause confusion for some players:

> When you say, 'I'm a female rugby player' you automatically get labelled as gay and big and butch (*laughter),* and its not nice when you're at school. I'm at school and they all think I'm the big butch lass and I'm the one not to mess with. When I go to rugby, I'm the girlie girlie one. It's like I'm two different people. . . .And I'm, I'm not bothered for myself but its the way that you come across to other people. They say 'Oh this is Belinda' blah blah blah, 'she plays rugby'. And then they go 'Oh', like that. Because you must be gay and big and fat and butch. And I don't like that. . . .When I'm at school they're like 'Oh, oh how many of them are gay? I bet you're all gay. Women rugby players always big butch forwards' and that. 'I'll bet they're all gay'. And you sit there and you think' But you're making assumptions and you don't know, and you don't know who they are or what they are or anything so' yeah. So you sit there and you go 'Shut up! You don't know anything!' And they just look at you and go 'Aye. She's not one of the gay ones'.
>
> (Belinda)

Belinda's problem is that she, like the others, does not consider herself to be "one of the big, butch ones" on the team. Indeed, none of the women I spoke to would identify themselves in that way. The split between the two identities Belinda feels, when she says she feels 'like two different people' is such that it becomes impossible to reconcile the two.

Bethany recognises that this masculine, 'butch' lesbian image is one of the main problems for the team. The collapse of sexuality into gender makes it very difficult for the team to ever win acceptance from some members of the community:

> You know, I don't think they like the lesbian . . . side, at all. I think if it was somebody who was very feminine, they'd think it was good, but when they're not, they don't like it.

There is a worry in the team that such a perception may scare away potential new players. Yet as things stand, there are few strategies for the Jesters to use to assert control over their identity.

A further difficulty for the Jesters is that this lesbian imagery does not allow them to escape sexual objectification by the men around them. For example, Michael claims that women's rugby does not interest him:

> Unless I maybe coach the English lesbian rugby or something! (*Laughter*).

He claims he would become interested in women's rugby to satisfy his own sexual desires - that he would be prepared to coach a lesbian team sexualises the entire issue of women playing rugby. The fact that these women would not be interested in him sexually has less to do with the issue than his assumption that these women would be playing for his gratification.

This objectification of women who play rugby, as desirable to heterosexual men (regardless of the women's own sexual desires and orientation) is a pervasive theme throughout much of the fieldwork. For example, Bethany complains that the immediate reaction of men upon finding out that she plays rugby is sexual and lesbian oriented:

> 'Phwoar, what are you like down in the scrum, you touch each other up?'

The sexual element of women's rugby seems difficult to get away from.

The main problem with this issue is that the team cannot win. If they accept the image of lesbianism, they are immediately classified as being masculine and unacceptable. If, however, they reject it, they are seen as being heterosexual, but immediately allow their continued objectification by men - apparently the image of a team of female rugby players showering together is the stuff of male fantasy.

This objectification is a theme which is maintained throughout all of the discussions with the women involved, as well as with some of the men. Kieran, for example, when talking about women who played rugby was presented with the scenario of his meeting a very attractive, feminine looking girl who happened to play rugby:

> It would maybe be a one night stand or something but (*Laughter*), it wouldn't be, wouldn't be a relationship!

Again, the assumption exists that this woman is an object for his sexual gratification - she is not someone with whom he would consider having a serious relationship. Rather, she is an object to be used and discarded. This links with Emily's comment above that "You're not classed as a lady or a woman when you play rugby." Once a woman starts to play rugby, she loses any claims to respectability - she is not a lady, and nor is she a woman. As a result, she must either be lesbian or sexually available to men. This type of reputation is also not unknown among the Jesters, but promiscuity is also not really acceptable. One player who was known to have 'been around' the men's team was not particularly well liked, nor well spoken of.

Conclusion

The Jesters' ambiguity stems from both their integration into the masculine sub-culture of rugby, and their alienation from it. This contradiction takes place on all levels, with all people. Both the Jesters and outsiders acknowledge this status.

On the one hand, the Jesters are accepted as being a part of the rugby club and as such, a part of rugby sub-culture. They are rugby players. This is signified in their occupation of space in the club, by using changing rooms and attending club socials as independent agents rather than as partners of male players. It is also seen in their behaviour off the pitch, where they adopt many of the behaviours of male rugby teams in their boisterous takeover of public space.

However, they are also alienated from this culture. They are physically distinct, a "different species" as women and so can never hope to claim to be true rugby players as the current definitions stand. Their femininity precludes their inclusion. In addition to this, there is considerable uneasiness about how these women should be treated. On the one hand, one of the main objections to women playing rugby is in the possibility of their ruining their

physical appearance. On the other, women rugby players are all assumed to be masculine in appearance and build, regardless of how they appear. As a result of this, a contradiction exists in how they are actually seen. On the one hand they are perceived as being too feminine to be rugby players. On the other, they are too masculine to be women.

A final contradiction of this type is seen in the objectification of these women by the men. When perceived as being masculine, the Jesters among others, are labelled as being lesbian. This is a sexuality which precludes sexual interest in men. However, this sexuality is inverted, by making it a male heterosexual fantasy - lesbianism is objectified. In addition to this, the possibility of heterosexual relations between a male and female rugby players are also diminished, as the female player is perceived to be no better than a casual affair, to be discarded when finished with. This sexualisation of the women is a clear signal that they have not been fully integrated with rugby, and indeed that definite steps are being made to prevent this from occurring.

The Jesters respond by attempting to distance themselves from the club, to go their own way and to conciliate, attempting to make their identities more acceptable to those outside. As has been seen, the reactions of outsiders are often hurtful, exasperating and frustrating. Yet they continue to play. They are able to do this by utilising various strategies which are available to them. These are outlined in the following chapter, and their success at managing their identities is assessed.

Chapter 5:
'Oh, grow up!' - Managing a problematic gender identity

> You get some positive comments but you get some really 'Oh, grow up!' comments, you know?
>
> (Bethany)

The previous chapter established the Jesters' identity as being ambiguous. They are both accepted as being part of the rugby sub-culture, but also divided from it, and must manage their identity accordingly. This involves reconciling an identity which is both masculine and feminine, and also establishing a public face of the group which is acceptable to most of its members but which also does not antagonise people outside it. This chapter identifies some of the strategies used by the Jesters in their attempts to do this.

Because of their need both to fit in and also establish themselves as different from the ways they are seen, thus eliminating the sexualised nature of the external 'Gaze', the Jesters use a seemingly contradictory array of techniques. This is because they are trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, and both fit in and assert independence.

Three individual strategies may be identified, although all of them are used in conjunction with the others depending on social situation and the number of players present at the time. The first is the assertion of team identity, protecting individual players from criticism, and allowing the extremes of behaviour to determine the identity of the remainder of the group. This strategy is consistent with the Jesters' integration into rugby sub-culture, and reflects many of the behaviours of male teams. This ties in with an important part of rugby culture which involves the submerging of individual identity into that of the team, making the good and decisions of the team more important than those of individual players. This gives individual players a measure of protection from abuse and allows them to assert the identity of 'rugby player' more clearly.

The second strategy involves the public assertion of an alternative form of gender identity - that is, the rewriting of a woman's gendered and sexual identity into a form which encompasses women doing things such as play rugby. This takes the form of the singing of sexually explicit or subversive songs. However, this strategy highlights the Jesters' basic

insecurity and desire to conform, in that at least one of the songs sung by the team explicitly disempowers women, symbolically reasserting heterosexual masculinity.

This is associated with the development of an acceptable sexual 'face' for the team, the third strategy, and the norms of heterosexuality are imposed. This occurs on a number of fronts, including private as well as public behaviour, particularly in the control of the team's public sexuality and the maintenance of a publicly heterosexual face. This has problems, not only because it implies that the Jesters are still sexually available to men, but also because it does not allow some team members to fully express their sexuality or allow their partners to be integrated with the team. Ultimately, it will be seen that the Jesters are unable to reconcile their two identities, and so are unsuccessful in asserting control.

Team identity and group solidarity - rites of passage

One of the most important features of rugby sub-culture is the importance placed on the team and on loyalty towards and support of team mates. Rugby teams are often characterised by close bonding between players. It is a strange kind of closeness, built on mutual trust and dependency, but not necessarily on liking. On the pitch, players rely on other players' physical presence and support in certain situations. For example, all of the players must push together in order for a scrum to be successful. The players are 'bound' together, physically very intimate both with their team and with the opposition. This physical support may then be extended from normal game situations to situations such as scuffles and fights. On one occasion, as a fight broke out between a group of the Jesters and the opposing team, I turned around and saw a player who was pregnant, and therefore not playing, on the pitch about to become involved.

It also extends to situations off the pitch, emphasised by the way players talk about team mates whilst they are out on the town. After one night out, a player turned to me and said 'We had quite a good crew out tonight didn't we?' The term 'crew' was referring specifically to our rugby team mates and not to the other women present, and implies a tight unit of people working together, an accurate description of how the team works. On that particular night out there were eight women out, five of whom were rugby players.

This view of the rugby players was also held by the other members of the group. The rugby players were seen as being the 'enforcers' or 'protectors'. The comment that 'The rugby girls

are out tonight. Good.' was made by one woman, who knew that she would be supported if there was any trouble. Other people commented that they don't like people 'messing' with their friends, and that even if they didn't like a player, they would stand up for them and fight for them. One player, discussing her relationship with another claimed that although she didn't like her "if I saw her getting her head kicked in, I would stop and help her." If one team member seems to be in trouble, and the rest of the team are in the pub, several teammates are likely to go over and lend some support, physical if not verbal. And if one player is barred from a pub, the rest of the team will boycott it. The 'one in, all in' attitude is born on the pitch and carried on afterwards.

This is very important if we consider the difficulties individual players may encounter in attempting to defend either their identity as a rugby player or their femininity. This binding of the team ensures no player is ever isolated if performing the problematic identity. If one player is out in society identifying herself as a rugby player, the entire team, or fellow teammates are ready to back her up. This may occur as being a non-verbal but physical presence as a 'team' in a pub, or simply be out and about in smaller groups. As a result of this, the players all feel themselves to be sheltered by the team:

> [W]e've got a team spirit, you know what I mean? You can go, even if you're not playing, you can guarantee that somebody will speak to you or give you a phone, that sort of thing.
>
> (Ciara)

> But we're not, we don't go out, that's a total lie. I was going to say when we go out we don't take over but we do! But it's not like, we're just enjoying ourselves, it's not to be, to get people's back up or anything like that, it's just, because we're a team. We just want to enjoy ourselves.
>
> (Trish)

> I . . . love the team. I think it's amazing, you know? I really do. It's like having 20 sisters. It's really quite cool. You know, it is really cool and I enjoy it. I love the tours and I do enjoy all that. That's why it's important to us.
>
> (Bethany)

The importance of family in Bordertown was discussed in Chapter 3, and here the team is also likened to a family. Despite the fact that not everyone gets along in the team, they are still bound together - everyone belongs.

Even when not playing rugby, the team supports its players. Several players have mentioned that the Jesters were instrumental in helping them through difficulties such as the loss of a child, the breakdown of a relationship or difficulties at work. Trish's analysis is that they are a team, and that as such, they go out and be together. This is a close-knit group of people who socialise together, even if they do not necessarily get along.

The social side, born out of the team morale and closeness, is another aspect of rugby which encourages closeness and support. It is normal for the Jesters to go out together and spend time together away from rugby:

> [I]n hockey, it was just a case of you go, you play your game, and you just come away. There (*Rugby*). . . you would go and you'd socialise afterwards and you'd go away at the weekends and that? Hockey wasn't like that. Eventually rugby took over from the hockey.
>
> (Emily)

This sentiment is echoed by male players, for whom the opportunities to socialise with team mates, and with players from other clubs made rugby a more attractive option than, for example, football:

> Just more . . . sort of togetherness with other clubs and with, with your, your fellow players I would say. With football you used to, after the games you'd maybe go to the clubhouse and things, you'd never, you know, you'd just sit in your groups, you wouldn't speak to them, they wouldn't speak to you. Football's like that, whereas rugby, it's far more socially oriented I think.
>
> (Liam)

> I don't know. . . . My general opinion of football supporters is that they're pretty thick, which . . . I think they are. And, well . . . and, I don't know, they're just, you never hear of violence at a rugby match.
>
> (Kieran)

Both Kieran and Liam came to rugby from football and both can see a definite difference in each sports' culture. In rugby, where the violence is explicit and controlled on the pitch, there is an emphasis on sociability after the match, and of mingling with the other team, (although this does not always happen). This contrasts with football which is not as physical a game, and which has a public face marred by reports of crowd violence and a lack of contact between teams after the match.

This results in a very strong bond between players, and a sense of obligation to individuals and the team. New team members were initiated into the team by singing in the team bus aisle, with trousers around ankles, and the team was renewed symbolically through the ritual of the best and worst player of the day having a drinking competition after the match. They were also expected to lead the singing on the way home. 'Tour virgins', players who had not been away on tour with the team before, were 'deflowered' through elaborate and very public humiliations. Involving the donning of costume, which the entire team did, plus extras. The 'virgins' were expected to carry out the tasks allotted them by the rest of the team. These ranged, on my tour, from getting the bar man to show me his underwear to 'mooning' out the tour bus window in England, Scotland and Ireland. This involved the player concerned pulling down her trousers and putting her buttocks against the bus window - better done, she discovered, when the bus was in motion, rather than sitting on the ferry waiting to be unloaded. In these ways, the team is bound together off the pitch as well as on it, and the concept of the 'team' is elevated above the identities of individual players.

This idea is possibly best exemplified in the use of the 'kangaroo court', something which is also common across men's teams. In this, the players are assigned the roles of jury, witnesses, defence, prosecution and judge, and players or coaches who are deemed to have disobeyed the team or brought dishonour on the group are 'tried' and punished. One court, convened for a male friend of mine, tried him because he was told specifically not to score any tries during the tour. Unfortunately, he could not avoid it, and so was sentenced to 'streak' (run naked) around a large square in his home town. However, these seem to be convened in the Jesters not in response to an infringement but because it is seen as being the 'proper' thing to do. Rugby teams do this, the Jesters are a rugby team, therefore they will hold a court. Although it does serve the function of reasserting the team's primacy, it occasionally smacks more of performing the role of rugby team, rather than being it.

Any suggestion, however gentle, that things might be able to be done in a different way was met by blank stares, and I was left with the definite understanding that nothing was able to be changed. This included moves towards a more open or inclusive group, the abandonment of some of the more humiliating practices of the team, or even my practice of apologizing to opponents on the pitch for mistackling them or hurting them. I, and other members of the team, were told not to apologise, that this "was rugby". Apology was taken as a sign of weakness. The Jesters' perception of themselves as a rugby team is not to be taken lightly, and is not one which allows for very much flexibility or redefinition.

Though this might seem to be a somewhat primitive and inflexible rule, in practice it works very well. The women look out for each other and all players, liked or disliked, are offered the protection of the team. Every player has a stake in the team - they are personally connected to it through rites of passage. The closeness of the team means that individual players are not, therefore, singled out for criticism, particularly if the team are out on the town 'acting up'. While aware that others disapprove of the way that they are behaving, the Jesters *en masse* present a security which means that all of the players are able to enjoy themselves. They also present a challenge in terms of how they are perceived, because of the wide variety of physical shapes and sizes, it is very difficult for outsiders to develop a coherent response to the group. This allows individuals in the group a greater degree of freedom in their attitudes and behaviour.

This freedom is something which tends to attract attention and criticism, as discussed in Chapter 4, and evidence tends to suggest that the Jesters are not quite as confident about their identities as rugby players as they might seem. This is also expressed in their sensitivity to criticism about their behaviour off the pitch. Because rugby is a context where they are allowed to act out, they do so. In fact, most of them see it is as being a necessary part of the role of rugby players:

> Because it was er, because it was the way that rugby was. Traditional rugby is, have a pint and a sing . . . and we just wanted to be classed as proper rugby players. Probably went about it a little bit wildly. However, we didn't have from six years old to get used to it. So . . . we just did everything, all in one go.
>
> (Bethany)

The concern with being proper rugby players seems to result in a desire to do things right. This is also related to the importance attached to the performance of the rituals of being a rugby player, such as the initiation rites, the kangaroo courts, and the singing which is examined below. Unfortunately, it seems that in order to do things right in a rugby sense, it means that you must do things wrong as far as feminine behaviour goes.

The embodiment of the Jesters

Part of being a rugby player, as shown above, is the physicality inherent in that identity. As seen above, one of the main obstacles to women being fully integrated into the identity of 'rugby player' was based on perceptions of their bodies and their physical capacity. In fact, rugby has resulted in the Jesters becoming more confident about their bodies and the ways in which they are able to use their bodies, a fact which in turn has increased their confidence in other areas, particularly in how they inhabit public space and perform in public.

For example, three Jesters discussed their lack of confidence in their bodies, and it is evident from the behaviour of others that body image is an important issue for others in the team. Rugby, however, seems to have helped them, not only because of its physicality but also because of the diversity of people who play rugby. Many of the Jesters came to rugby after a diverse athletic career at school and afterwards. Although most are reasonably athletic, they found that 'traditional' sports didn't satisfy them in the same way as rugby. Much of this hinges on the ways in which they interact with their bodies, and about their ability to cope with the physical demands of rugby. A characteristic of some of the women is an intense discomfort with their body's appearance of physical presence:

> I was all short body and really long legs, and I just couldn't control them. I couldn't do gymnastics or anything like that, I didn't know where to put my legs. Couldn't do long jump, couldn't do high jump, just these muckle[1] long legs, out of control. No, so it was really hockey, netball, shot-put . . . Apart from that I just went around with the boys that were my age, watching them play rugby. And that's it.
>
> (Bethany)

[1]This is a Scottish term meaning "much" or "great". It is used in the Jesters instead of "very" which is not really strong enough, as "muckle" implies greater excess and more informality.

Bethany's description of herself as having "these muckle long legs, out of control" implies a sense in which she was not comfortable with her body playing other sports. Even in netball, where she excelled, she says this was because she was an oddity - taller than everyone else. The other sport she played to a high level was shot-put - a sport relying on strength. She was not comfortable in inhabiting her body or controlling it. Rugby is, therefore, a way of building up her confidence in her body. Her involvement with rugby is partly because she wants to support her team, but also because she feels that by exercising she is able to develop her body along the lines that she wants:

> I have a severe complex about my body . . . I have two ex-boyfriends who called me fat on a regular basis, so once you've had that hammered into your head for eight years, you kind of start to believe it. I've got a little bit of a complex about that. . . . Um, so I do do that for myself, eh, but I also do it as a player because, going back to the team thing, I don't want to let anybody down and I know that I do let people down.
>
> (Bethany)

Rugby is this instance is used instrumentally - it is a justification for exercising which has the side-effect of allowing Bethany to lose weight without attracting too much social censure. The social support of the team is acknowledged. As a structure, the team is vitally important. However, the physical nature of rugby has also been important in teaching Bethany about how to use and control her body. This means that Bethany is able to use alternative ways of controlling her body. Her strength is needed to play rugby, meaning that losing weight can no longer be her primary goal in body control. Rather, she controls her sense of herself by playing rugby which as a sport allows her to feel comfortable about her size. Evidently rugby cannot entirely allow Bethany to overcome all of her problems. She is still conscious of letting her team mates down because she feels that her playing ability and fitness are not at a high enough standard. This may result in a fairly vicious cycle in that the more she trains and invests in rugby, the more pressure she puts on herself, and the more difficult she finds it to meet her standards. Bethany has moved towards a healthier body image of herself and is certainly more comfortable as a result of rugby. Her continuing ambivalence reflects the continuing confusion the Jesters have about how they are supposed to look, masculine or feminine.

Belinda also comments on how playing rugby enables her to feel more confident about her body, particularly when she compares herself both to the other women who play rugby and to her peers at school.

> I don't like being in a swimming costume. . . I just feel next to [my sister], she's like little and thin. And then she's going like 'Oh, you've got a fat bum' and 'Oh, you've got really broad shoulders, you've not got a chest.' You become very aware of what you've not got and what you have got. . . . I'm more open now. You know when I first started playing rugby I had to get changed on the sideline, like I'd cover myself up, like Sally had to put my clothes on. I'd keep them together and she'd be pulling them on and that. . . . and now I don't care about my top. I wouldn't change my trousers for anyone, but I'm not bothered about my top, my shoulders or anything. . . . I think it helped with the rugby because everyone's so open and . . . well nearly everybody's so open and not bothered about the way they look, and they all keep telling us I'm skinny and I'm all right. So, um, yeah. They do help you a lot. . . . There's a lot of them [at school] keep going 'Oh, my bum's really big' 'Oh do I look all right in this?', 'Ooh, ooh, he'll fancy me in this', and I'll go out there and I'm not bothered. But I'm not going to change who I am or what I like to please someone else.
>
> (Belinda)

Belinda is one of the younger members of the team. Her main complaints and insecurity stem from her build, which is athletic but not feminine. She has broad shoulders but she's "not got a chest". In a social context which rewards women for looking feminine, and for possessing curves, Belinda stood out. Playing rugby removed her from this type of environment and exposed her to a different, older group of women, who had fewer insecurities about their bodies. As a result, Belinda has become more confident, as well as been able to watch how her body changed, partly as a result of playing rugby and partly because of her maturing.

These shifts in body image are partly due to the novelty of rugby, and the different ways these women are taught to experience their bodies. The physical nature of rugby involves the testing of one body's strength and skill against another, and this challenge is something relished by the players, as it gives them a new challenge. Ciara explicitly mentions the physical nature of rugby as being the things which she enjoys most about it:

> It's just, yeah, I mean. The actual game itself I enjoy . . . It's the physical . . . I like, not that you'd actually hurt somebody but you know what I mean? That sort of stuff.
>
> (Ciara)

Most of the women didn't talk about this aspect of rugby, but it is one of the things which binds them all together. The fact that in rugby, it is a test of strength and endurance, and that it is a violent game with the opportunity to be physical is one of the thrills of the experience. Although not mentioned in interviews, the physicality, and the ability to test the body and how far people are able to go, and the fact that the body can and does survive this type of testing is something which attracts some women. The intensity of the physical experience results in different ideas about the individual's body and its capabilities. Despite the discomfort about other people's bodies and efforts to avoid looking at them, many players found a new sense of confidence, born in part from an increased confidence in their bodies (Hargreaves, 1994: 272). Obviously the physicality does have its problems:

> The pain on a Monday morning (*Laughter)* . . . And . . . no. You get addicted. It's like an addiction. You cannot stop . . . I just cannae explain it. It's just something that gets into you . . . And I hate probably the initial, when they blow the first whistle at the start of the game. That first couple of minutes you're just like *Breathes in sharply* and then you get your first hit and from there. . . . Even then, right before the game I'm usually fine, and I'm on and that. But it's just that, few seconds, when he blows the whistle and they come running at you and 'Oh no!' (*Laughter*) '*Why* do I do this?' but yeah. Monday mornings. Well, it's Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday now. . . I hate . . . the mess I get into.
>
> (Trish)

As a result of the physical nature of the game, players walk away with injuries ranging from severe bruising and grazes to fractured or broken bones, black eyes or broken noses. All players recognise this part of the game, but continue to play anyhow. But a side-effect of this is the fear which most players experience - fear of injury, fear of the opposition. And it hits all players moments before kick off, before the 'first hit', the first tackle, is made. Feeling sick with nerves for the morning before a match is normal and most players complain of it. But allied to this is the thrill, implied by Ciara, of the physical challenge.

As a result of playing rugby, these women are also more confident than other women in Bordertown in the ways they occupy space. For example, one of the first players I noticed in Bordertown, before I met her, I saw because of the way she stood in a pub. She stood with her legs apart, square on the ground, shoulders back, hand in her pocket as she drank. People moved around her in the same way they moved around the men in the bar. Trish noted that although rugby had not really changed her relationship with her body, it had given her the confidence in other social situations, where she felt more comfortable being alone and dealing with people she was unfamiliar with, without the support of others:

> It's mainly more confiden[ce] in the fact that like if I'm going into somewhere on my own, like with a group of different people, I would be more likely to go in there. Like say I was going to a pub on my own, a few year ago, I wouldn't have dreamed of walking into a pub on my own, it'd be just like, 'Meet us at that door.' You know, but now I just wouldn't give it a thought.
>
> (Trish)

Confidence away from the pitch and in her ability to handle situations and people she cannot control, or enter social spaces such as pubs where she knows no-one are the things Trish takes away from rugby. This is not something unique to her. Most of the women in the Jesters would be comfortable in situations such as this because of the different way they feel about themselves after playing rugby.

The players also tend to interact with men differently, being prepared to talk to them as equals as opposed to potential partners - there is a noticeable lack of flirting between men and women who play rugby. Part of this is for the reasons outlined in Chapter 4, but part of it is also the women's attitude. If they are out in a group, they need not make concessions to anyone. The numbers in the team, the diversity of physical types in the team and the importance of supporting team mates means that they do not need the support of others when out and about.

The Jesters also display a range of behaviours when out in a group which tends to send out mixed signals to outside observers, and to make classification difficult. In addition to this, as examined in Chapter 4, there tends to be a physical stereotyping of women who play rugby as being physically masculine in appearance. In fact, as Bethany said above, Bordertown were confused at the start because of the sheer physical diversity of the group of women

who were out together. This means that the extremes of femininity and 'female masculinity' are displayed and most players fit comfortably into the middle, displaying a combination of characteristics which are mainly acceptable to others. In this sense, the extremes tend to legitimate the moderate. The extremes of behaviour range from ultra-feminine dress, appearance and behaviour to a fairly masculine manner and appearance. The majority of players tend to fall somewhere in the middle.

In doing this, the Jesters are using a characteristic of communities which relates to their borders and margins. In essence, the extremes and the most marginalised are used to give the rest of the group a sense of where they belong, to define membership more clearly and establish acceptable norms of behaviour.

This occurs through a similar process to the ways that nation-states are seen to imagine their borders and border population. Paasi's notion that borders are where 'We' end and 'They' begin (1996: 13), implies a measure of what goes on. If borders are imagined to divide territory in the same way as they divide social imagination, and represent merely concrete imaginings of where a community begins and ends, the role of boundary markers, be they lines on a map or the behaviour of group members play an important role in enclosing members of the community, defining where 'we' stop, the edge of civilisation. The extremes and the margins mark the place where the categories of 'we' and 'they' are blurred, but for those in the centre, the majority of players in the Jesters, the extremes serve to identify themselves as part of the group. Located at the centre of the group's identity, the extremes defined where they were and who they were. And by accepting many of those extremes, the group as a whole presented an ambiguous and difficult to define face to the world.

In doing this, the Jesters use two strategies identified by Kvande (1999) in her study of the ways in which female engineers negotiate feminine identities in the workplace. According to this model of analysis, four main strategies for women in such situations can be identified. The choice of strategy depends on whether a woman wishes to assert her difference from the masculine context in which she operates, or her similarity (1999: 306). We can see that the Jesters in fact wish to do both of these things. On the one hand they wish to emphasise their similarity to the men who play rugby, which would allow them to unproblematically embrace their sense of themselves as rugby players and have these identities accepted by others. On the other hand, they see this as being difficult to achieve, and in the interests of

causing as little disruption as possible, attempt to emphasise their difference from the men, asserting their femininity and therefore allowing an acceptable identity to take precedence.

At an individual level, players may be divided into three categories - those who behave in 'ultra-feminine' ways, those who take on 'ultra-masculine/rugby player' ways and those who fit into the middle. The group as a whole both challenges the existing norms, becoming like the men, but also distances itself from such a challenge, by reaffirming the group's femininity through an assertion of heterosexuality.

The players who act like 'one of the boys' decrease the difference between themselves and the men involved. In this sense, they behave and appear as one would expect male rugby players to act. These players as individuals tend to dress in loose-fitting or men's clothes, do not wear make-up or have long hair - their appearance is, in many ways, androgynous. It is these players who tend to attract the attention, often disapproving, of outsiders. For example, in Chapter 4, Michael drew the distinction between women rugby players and his 'lady shoppers' when he said:

> They're rugby players, they tend to do similar things to men off the pitch, the drinking and the singing, things like that. Whereas I don't think you'd find many groups of, you know, lady shoppers, singing or drinking pints or whatever.

The behaviours noted here are the singing of songs in public which tends to attract attention to the team, and the fact that some female rugby players drink pints, rather than the more 'ladylike' drinks of alcopops or mixers. In fact, some of the players do drink pints, but others do not. But by drinking a pint of beer or lager, individual players assert their similarity to men.

Various Jesters described themselves as being 'tomboys', or even 'butch', although this was more rare. Both of these terms have implications of masculinity. And some of the players also embraced the identity of 'lesbian'. Although I will not argue that any of the players saw themselves as being 'masculine' as such, some of their behaviours certainly appeared this way. In addition to this, there is the emphasis on the appearance of being 'hard', uncompromising, emotionless and likely to solve problems through physical or verbal aggression which is espoused by some players. This means that some individual players in

the Jesters, as well as the group as a whole, perform a version of masculinity as they see it. It is a version which is appropriate to the activity they are involved in, replicating the behaviour they have observed among male teams.

However, other players explicitly reject such an appearance as individuals, although accepting it as part of the group's persona. In Chapter 4, Emily bewailed the fact that all women who play rugby are considered to be 'butch' and lesbian, because she does not see herself as being butch at all, and indeed is one of the smaller members of the team. Belinda too noted her split identity - at school she is seen as being 'butch', although at rugby she is 'the girlie, girlie one'. Women such as these tend to try to compensate for their masculine behaviour on the pitch with a more feminine behaviour away from it (Kvande, 1999: 312). Care is taken over their appearance, with short skirt or dressy trousers, make-up and heeled shoes normal after the games. Hairdryers are used after the match before the team goes into the bar. This causes comments from some other sides ("Look at them - they've got hairdryers!", to which these women responded "Yes, we care about how we look. We want to look nice!") In doing this, these players revert to a more passive, decorative use of their bodies - very different from their behaviour on the pitch. In doing this, they reassert their sexual desirability and attention is refocused on their bodies as sexual objects (Macdonald, 1995: 194). In doing this, their difference from the men is emphasised and their essential femininity is asserted.

These two extremes tend to confuse the reactions to the Jesters. Not only are these an intimidating group because of the numbers involved and the fact that they will support each other if necessary, but as a group they send out ambiguous identities - individuals in the same group appear to be both masculine and feminine. How are they to be best approached and handled? In this sense, the importance of the group identity and the strength of the group is an important part of the Jesters way of handling their problematic gender identity.

There are two other strategies which the Jesters use as a group to attempt to control reactions to them. One, again, challenges the norms of feminine behaviour in the public behaviour of the group as a whole, involving the Jesters' habit of occupying public space, and also singing. The other asserts their essential femininity by asserting the Jesters' heterosexuality as a group. These two strategies use the space created by the team to try to assert some control over their images. The strategy of team identity and solidarity outlined above does

not necessarily allow the Jesters to be either integrated or excluded from the social contexts of Bordertown or rugby. Rather, it creates space for their performance of other strategies and identities.

Singing in the Jesters - implications of gender identity

The Jesters have become skilled performers of their gendered identities, taking on both masculine (or resistance) identities and feminine (or conforming) identities. These are expressed in theatrical and exaggerated ways, although the players seem to be unaware of the ironical or contradictory nature of some of these performances.

One of the most interesting ways which these are performed is in the choice of songs which are sung after matches, on the bus or in clubhouses. One of the reasons these are sung is because singing is part of 'traditional' rugby culture, and that these women want to be seen as 'proper' rugby players. However, their choice is interesting, implying both an attitude of defiance towards disapproval, and also a desire to be accepted, or to appease those who disapprove of them.

On the one hand, the Jesters sing a song which is called 'Rugby Men', sung to the tune of 'Knick-knack, paddy whack':

Rugby men, they play one,
They think they have all the fun.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play two,
They can't get it up to screw.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play three,
They all think that sex is free.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play four,
They can't get it up to score.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play five,
They don't have enough sex drive!
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play six,
Great big men with little dicks.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play seven,
Masturbation is their heaven.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play eight,
They always come in too late!
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play nine,
They all take it from behind.
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's what we play!

Rugby men, they play ten,
Little boys who think they're men!!!
With a knick-knack, paddy whack, send the boys away!
Women's rugby's here to stay!

This is one of the stock songs for the Jesters, sung usually in response to prompting by men's teams or because the women wish to assert their presence. It explicitly refutes the masculinity and heterosexuality of men who play rugby, in a similar way to some songs sung by male teams, which denigrate women and homosexuals (Dunning, 1986: 84). Asserting both that men are unable to satisfy women sexually, with allegations that they are physically inadequate and sexually inept, incapable of giving women sexual pleasure, or that they are homosexual or find pleasure only in self-gratification, the women assert their own sexual independence. The last verse may be read as being particularly subversive in the infantalisation of men playing rugby. This is especially deflating for male egos and usually draws the most laughs from both men and women present, because it plays on the whole notion of rugby being a place where men are made into men, and the self-importance

which accompanies rugby playing culture and teams. By saying that the men are fooling themselves, that they are only small boys without any notion of what to do sexually or socially, the women are able to claim independence from them.

The song also explicitly places women as sexually active and possibly predatory. The women appear to be distancing themselves from 'rugby men', rather than all men, claiming that they are unable to be satisfied by them, and would rather find real men, rather than 'little boys' pretending. By asserting their own sexuality, the women are able to empower themselves at the expense of the men who are involved in rugby.

This song can be contrasted with one sung by another team in the League. This one is not known to the Jesters, although it was appreciated by them. The entire song has not been written out, but is interesting because it represents a song sung by men, which has both homosexual and heterosexual connotations, but which when sung by women, with some additional verses, alters to become something about male heterosexuality and female sexuality, both heterosexual and lesbian:

(Refrain) If I was the marrying kind,
I thank the Lord I'm not sir!
The kind of (wo)man I'd like to marry
Would be a rugby . . .
(Spoken) What sir?

Half time orange.
A half time orange sir? Why sir?

(Sung) Cause I'd get sucked and (s)he'd get sucked,
We'd both get sucked together!
And we'd be all right in the middle of the night
Getting sucked together!

Other verses include:

- A rugby goal post
Cause I'd stand erect
- A rugby stud
Cause I'd get screwed
- A rugby spectator in the rain
Cause I'd come in rubber
- A rugby groundskeeper

Cause I'd trim bush
- Another rugby spectator in the rain
Cause I'd get wet
- A rugby spectator in the sun
Cause I'd come again
- A rugby winger
Cause I'd get creamed
- A rugby prop
Cause I'd keep it up
- A rugby centre
Cause I'd come from deep
- A rugby second row
Cause I'd sniff bum
- A rugby number 10
Cause I'd whip it out

Obviously, the meanings and implications for some verses depends on who is singing them. Some make sense only if men only or women only are singing them. For example, it is hard to see how a woman can sing about being a rugby goal post, whereas men might find it difficult to be the second rugby spectator in the rain. Many of the other verses can be interpreted to make sense for both men and women. Women singing about being a groundskeeper has definite connotations of lesbian sexuality whereas for men singing it, it implies an enjoyment in giving oral sex to a woman. Many of the verses can also be interpreted as homosexual sexuality for men, or as a neutral kind of sexuality, without any real reference, which is probably the way the song is intended to be interpreted. I suspect many of the versus were made up simply because the words fit into the necessary rhythm.

Another interpretation of this is that here is a song which men or women can sing which is not necessarily derogatory to either, and where different forms of male and female sexuality may be able to co-exist. If this is the intention of the song, however, it makes it unique among the other songs in rugby sub-culture.

This neutrality and resistance is a stark contrast to a final song which is associated with the Jesters, although really it is simply a verse tacked onto the end of a longer rugby song sung by the men:

As I was walking through the thatch
Some bastard came and poked me in the snatch.
I cried for help but no help came

And so he poked my snatch again.

Let's tango!
(Verse is repeated with players dancing on the spot)

No male rugby team ever sings this as it clearly makes no sense for men to sing about being 'poked in the snatch' if 'snatch' is recognised as a slang term for a vagina. This verse is sung by the Jesters with no apparent awareness that what is being described is the multiple rape of a woman in a field. As such, the call of 'Let's tango' (an invitation to dance or celebrate) seems grotesque, and the singing of such a thing usually provokes surprise from men present, expressed in the form of silence or uneasy laughter. The odd thing about this is that in singing about rape like this, female sexuality is normalised as being something under the control of men, a message which undercuts the message of the first song and the neutrality of the second. It is strange that having taken steps to definitely distance themselves from men and assert their independence, the Jesters can sing a verse such as this with little reflection about what they are actually singing. Unlike many other songs which, although offensive, often undercut male sexuality by belittling it, and normalise homophobia and male heterosexuality through 'ironic' or 'jesting' verses, this one involves women singing about their own rape in a way which makes it seem normal and acceptable. The fact that it is not is reflected more in the reactions of others than in the team's consciousness.

This acceptance of rape seems out of keeping with other studies of women's rugby and other songs. In other instances or songs, celebrating gang bangs, prostitution, bestiality and bondage (Wheatley, 1990: 199 - 205), women are able to reposition themselves as sexually powerful by subverting the perceptions of the relative positions of power by asserting that they enjoy such activities as 'gang bangs' because of the opportunities for continuous sexual pleasure. However, in the excerpt above, it is evident that the woman is not enjoying herself, and that she "cried for help, but no help came". She is powerless to resist and help herself and no-one was nearby to help her. As a result, she was raped not once, but twice. Her anger is expressed only through her description of the man as a "bastard". Her helplessness as depicted here is a direct contradiction of the power and control expressed through the other songs.

Attempts at publicly asserting independence are often undercut by the team themselves, then, as they are aware that they cannot stray too far from the acceptable. This sends out

confusing messages in terms of the ways in which the team is prepared to manage their gender identity. On the surface, much of the Jesters' behaviour and verbalised responses to questioning indicates that they are both proud of their independence, and that they are not worried about what others may think. This is indicated in the confidence expressed by the women because of their involvement in rugby, their use of the team to eliminate individuality and so protect all group members, and the loud announcement of their presence in pubs and other public places through their singing. A closer examination reveals a residual anxiety about their position, and particularly a willingness to surrender their positions of power and independence, particularly sexually, in order to allow male heterosexuality, and so rugby norms to be reasserted. This is particularly clear, not only in the songs sung, but also in the Jesters' behaviour surrounding their sexuality and the presentation of an 'acceptable' sexual identity.

An acceptable sexuality

The final strategy used by the team to attempt to avoid difficulties is the performance of a publicly heterosexual face. That this was a concern can be seen throughout the data discussed throughout this thesis. The Jesters are aware that their potential lesbianism is a sticking point for many outsiders in the club. In addition to this, for many of them such an identity represents a direct contradiction of their own sense of self, particularly with regard to their sense of femininity. As a result of both of these things, the Jesters attempt to maintain a heterosexual identity at all times:

> I used to say 'We don't have any lesbians on our team.' . . . Which was true. Well, I thought it was, until last year, and now I can't say that any more. . . . So now I have to say 'Yeah, we've got lesbians on the team, but there's only three' well no, I used to say there's only two, but I have to say there's only three. 'And I am not a lesbian.' It doesn't bother me because I've never ever ever been asked if I was a lesbian. I think its cause I'm one of the more feminine ones. Long hair and the skirts and blah, blah, blah.
>
> (Bethany)

For Bethany, her reactions to accusations of lesbianism in the team are a mixture. Although it does not ever personally affect her in that she is one of the more 'feminine' ones, it is still a worry for her in terms of the way it makes the team look. Hence her concern to paint the team as being entirely heterosexual. Sadly for Bethany, this was not to remain the case as,

over the course of two seasons (starting just after I joined the team, I assume that I was not the catalyst) three players well known to the rest of the team 'came out'. Despite this, however, Bethany and others in the team continue their attempts to portray the team as being essentially heterosexual. This means that in the most important way, the Jesters are still feminine because they are still potentially available to men as sexual partners. This means that the attitude and culture of the team is homophobic in both a conscious and unconscious way.

Players make specific efforts to establish their identity as heterosexual. However, this does not imply that the Jesters accept a 'loose' heterosexuality. Although sexual relationships are accepted, numerous casual sexual relationships are not. Women on the team are expected to go 'out on the pull', to try to get a 'click' (or have sexual intercourse). However, promiscuity is not encouraged. Attitudes are somewhat confused. On the one hand, players who choose to act promiscuously when away from Bordertown, for example on tour, are not stigmatised. On tour, the team code is 'What goes on tour, stays on tour', a measure which protects the players' reputations. This also means that disclosures about all players' behaviour away does not get told to partners at home. Because of this, it is possible for players to have a certain amount of flexibility and freedom in terms of sexuality. Players also have the option of not remaining faithful to their sexual partners at home and although this is not encouraged, it is condoned by others.

Players are not encouraged to be as sexually aggressive as men, however. It is not acceptable, for example, for a player to have sex (or a 'shag'). She should 'make love' to her partner, a term which implies a degree of emotional intimacy with the man involved. This concern highlights an awareness of the attitude which Kieran expressed in Chapter 4, that women who play rugby are one-night stands, rather than serious relationship material. To consider a woman to be sexually available is to socially degrade her. Thus, in order to protect their social and sexual status, the Jesters must not be promiscuous themselves. They must protect their worth as women, and must therefore be somewhat circumspect in their behaviour.

Anxiety regarding accusations of lesbianism was discussed in Chapter 4. For the Jesters, the entire issue came to a head when the three players mentioned above 'came out'. This led to an increase in tensions in the team, not only because of the fact that some players disliked

the idea that a potentially sexual gaze had been added to the changing room environment, already sexualised by men's comments outside it. Others felt they were being discriminated against, or used this issue to attempt to gain a more powerful position on the team. Though these two were important issues, a further anxiety was the linking of lesbianism to masculinity with the corresponding problem of the team's public face, and the recognition that the accusations had their basis in attempts to marginalise and control the Jesters.

It is significant that although accusations are made, they are not often made in seriousness. Rather they are used to make a point about the players' gender ambiguity, in a way which has great social impact. This also reflects the differing social positions of the people, men and women involved. However, for the players, they are a source of great anxiety and, in some cases fear. During my time there, the issue of lesbianism was never mentioned between players of differing sexuality, although I suspect that had it been, many conflicts would have been avoided. Although they are never fully articulated or discussed, issues of sexuality and gender identity, and their relation to the position and viability of the team, are central to most of the team's behaviours.

One example of this can be found in the behaviour of the Jesters in the changing rooms. As might be expected from the discussion regarding women's sexuality and rugby, the changing rooms represent a source of apparent fascination and mystery for many men. The entire area seems to have been eroticised and sexualised. As a result, many of the questions about women's rugby asked by men centre around women's activities in the showers, particularly whether women's teams have sex in the showers (to which I wish I had responded 'Do men's?'). These are assumptions that women cannot possibly behave in similar ways to male teams.

The Jesters have reacted to this by attempting to make the entire changing room an asexual environment. Behaviour in the changing rooms is strictly controlled, particularly the direction of eyes and comments on bodies. Although on some levels the behaviour is matter of fact, much is highly ritualised. For example, one player will not get changed or shower with anyone else, as she refuses to let anyone else see her body. Other players refuse to shower with anyone who is suspected of being or who is known to be lesbian. This means that the team shares the changing rooms and showers in a strict order, with lesbian players possibly waiting outside having a cigarette, while other players shower and get dressed.

After an interval, lesbian players come in while the middle section of players is changing and getting showered. This middle section of players do not really care one way or another. Finally, the lesbian players shower. Although this is never discussed, the order rarely varies, and players wishing to change their place in the order usually ask permission from the rest of the team. This permission is always given, so upsetting the order is not a problem, though controlling who is in the shower and who can therefore see the bodies of others is. One player, mentioned above always showers alone and as a result, usually showers last, waiting for everyone else either in the bar, or in the changing rooms as everyone else gets changed (her discomfort surrounding her own body not extending to the sight of other naked bodies). Alternatively she tries to find a separate shower. This can be difficult and one occasion she fled back to the team's changing room explaining that a man had been in the shower she had been planning to use.

The rules about how people should look at the bodies of others are also fairly strict, although learned only through trial and (mostly) error. It is not normal for players to look at each other, most of them preferring to carry on conversation while looking at the wall or the floor if others are getting dressed. It is inevitable that everyone sees everyone else's bodies, but direct glances are not encouraged, and nor is eye contact. When dressing, it is also normal to keep the body as covered as much as possible with a towel. In the showers, people are reluctant to use the showers next to each other, forcing late comers into positions between others.

Comments about others' bodies are allowed, but only when both players are fully or almost fully clothed. In such instances, discussions about tattoos, weight loss or body image are normal. The only variation is when comments are made about injuries which occur on the arms, legs, back or face, which can occur in the changing rooms.

The importance of these behaviours is seen only in the reactions when people do not conform. Two examples illustrate this. The first is the reaction of the team when I walked in to the showers with the woman who showers alone. She froze, looked at me, gave what can only be described as an anguished squeal, and fled. The expressions on the rest of the team's faces when I returned to the changing room and asked what the problem was told me a great deal about what I had done wrong. This incident led to some good natured teasing later regarding my sexuality, with the woman in question claiming that this made her

wonder if I was lesbian. As was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, this was not an entirely innocent remark, but rather was a significant one in terms of how the team saw themselves and how players are expected to behave. In jokingly calling my sexuality into question, this player was both reassuring me that she did not see me as being a sexual threat to her, showing me that I belonged enough to be teased about it, but also implying how quickly I could have been marginalised had I actually been lesbian but not told the team. It became quickly evident that had this been the case, the fieldwork could not have continued, and indicated the strength of this particular issue within the Jesters' sense of who they are.

The second incident also involves me and, unfortunately, the same woman as we were discussing tattoos. She has a tattoo, but I was surprised by this, commenting that I had never seen it. Seeing her face, I hastened to explain that I hadn't seen it because I had never seen her body, because I did not look at her in the shower. Obviously explanations simply made things worse, and the resulting discomfort and embarrassment to both parties emphasise the importance of the controls over behaviour to the Jesters. When the gaze of team mates can be construed as sexual in what should be a non-sexual environment, there are problems with the team as a whole.

In Chapter 3, I mentioned the fact that team members occasionally fell out over various issues. One issue caused consistent tensions during my time with the team, and that was the issue of this heterosexual public face, and the fact that this was contrary to some of the players' sexual identities. Although the mechanisms described here did serve to avoid some problems, it was evident that eventually, a confrontation over the issue of lesbianism would have to take place. Because of the total lack of discussion regarding sexuality, this issue boiled for some time before erupting into one of the most spectacular confrontations of the season.

The team's atmosphere was casually homophobic - comments were so common as to go unnoticed by the majority of the team. In fact, I believe that most of the team do not consider themselves to be homophobic, and that most of the problem stems from the association of lesbianism with masculinity. However, it also reflects a more general trend in rugby towards homophobia. This was reflected in the casual use of homophobic and derogatory language in the team. For example, it was common for a coach to use terms such as 'poofter' or 'pansy' to describe players who were not giving their all, with the obvious

implications of effeminate identities for these players. For most of the women, this was unproblematic because their perception of themselves as rugby players eliminated any desire to be seen as feminine on the pitch. However, for the lesbian players, this represented an attack on who they were, and a continual denial of their sexuality. On one occasion, while waiting for all of the players to come out of the showers, one player turned around and asked if 'the dykes' were ready. This was said in a loud voice, and was heard by all in the room, including the players to whom she was referring. Lesbian players were not encouraged to bring their partners to team events, and if they did come along, team members rarely, if ever, made the effort to go and talk to them.

Ultimately, the team fell out about this. Although the team successfully weathered the storm of two players 'coming out' and then going out with each other, when a third player also came out some months later, it was evident that the players as a whole felt they had been tolerant enough. The woman in question was still very young, and had begun seeing a woman considerably older than her. Several problems occurred with this. One of the first was that the players were never told by the woman in question that she was lesbian, except for one player who also happened to be the most homophobic player on the team. She was told specifically, and soon spread the word round the team. Secondly, it was noticed that this woman had also started a relationship some months previous to coming out to the rest of the team, and that it was around this time that she decided to start showering with the others. Prior to this, she had tended to shower only by herself or with some of her closest friends. Once her relationship started, she was happy to shower with everyone. This, some felt, added a sexual gaze to the changing rooms, and seemed to exploit everyone else. Had they known she was lesbian it might not have been a problem, but as it was, they felt spied upon and objectified without their knowledge. Finally, her girlfriend was brought along to matches and team events, but in such a way that the woman in question no longer interacted with her team mates. This provided the catalyst.

The captain was told by other team members that they did not want to have to watch the two kiss on the team bus. The captain duly, though reluctantly, relayed the message. Immediately sides were taken. On the one side were the lesbian players who felt, correctly, that they were being discriminated against. They were not encouraged to bring their partners to events, and if they did, they were not allowed to behave as if a couple. One player asked me if it was normal that no-one on the team had ever seen her hold hands or

kiss her girlfriend. And great efforts were made by these players, although not always noticed or appreciated, to not make other players uncomfortable. As a result of this, they felt that they were entitled to at least some leeway in how they were being treated, particularly as they were part of the team and therefore part of the code outlined above.

On the other hand, the other players were genuinely threatened. Although it might be said that this woman had not handled the situation in a particularly good way, given the atmosphere within the team, it is probably no surprise that she did. However, the cumulative effect was to make everyone more uncomfortable, and to feel taken advantage of. In addition, there were concerns that lesbianism might be seen by outsiders as being catching, putting off potential recruits and detracting from the team's public image.

The anxiety which all of the women feel about this is because the labelling, although problematic for them, is simply used as a way of controlling their behaviour. Despite their brave and independent words, they are not as independent as they would like to be, and as a result the anxiety makes them more concerned to become look and behave in a feminine way.

Indeed most of the women claim to be feminine, do not see themselves as being 'butch' or masculine. They make efforts to dress up, in skirts, wearing make-up and looking attractive. And, as described above, the atmosphere is generally homophobic. Players are 'allowed' to be lesbian, as long as they don't act like that 'in public', with the rest of the team. This, of course, results in problems for some of the team members which others are aware of. Yet the rest of the team, though claiming not to have problems with it, still persist in ignoring the sexuality and personal lives of some of the players.

It is evident that there is a degree of ambiguity in what type of sexual norm the women are to conform to. Although lesbian sexuality is not accepted, neither are the women prepared to be aggressively heterosexual along masculine lines. They prefer to publicly assert a demure sexuality, allowing men to be the aggressors, and not being too available. That said, these are standards which are kept usually only in the situation of being in the public eye in Bordertown. Away from the 'home town', behaviour does not matter as much because the damage done to the team image will be less. All players are expected to abide by these rules, and the team code of identity and primacy is invoked to ensure that this happens.

Ultimately, then, the team asserts a sexuality which is entirely catering to the outside gaze of observers. The team presents a heterosexual face to the rest of the world, thus ensuring that they are perceived as sexually available, and hopefully desirable, to the men of Bordertown. In doing this, they are able to reassert their femininity in a very basic way. However, this causes the suppression and isolation of some players, whose sexuality is at odds with this 'face', and who find it difficult to perform the required role. They also do not see why they should. They play rugby in the same way as the rest of the Jesters, and so earn the same freedom as the rest. Because of their team membership, they cannot be entirely isolated, yet neither can they be fully integrated. The Jesters cannot, therefore, resolve their ambiguity through the performance of sexuality.

Conclusion

This analysis results in the conclusion that the Jesters cannot reconcile their ambiguous gender identity. They are able to create some freedom for themselves through the invocation of a team identity, a strategy which provides support and shelter for individuals whilst at the same time giving them the confidence to display the identity of rugby players. Playing rugby also gives them the confidence to inhabit social space in a different way, both as individuals and a group. However, it is evident that they are not entirely sure what to do with this freedom once it has been gained.

They are able to perform as rugby players effectively because they can occupy space as a group. Verbally, both in conversation and song, they assert their independence from men, from their gender roles as women, and their sexual relationships with men. In so doing, they become truly independent on an individual and a group level.

However, this freedom seems to limit them. One of their most popular songs reasserts male sexual dominance, and enhances the Jesters' powerless position in terms of their identity. They claim a more independent identity, but retreat from it, allowing the 'rape' of a player to be celebrated in song. This sexual dominance is also displayed in the embracing of a heterosexual identity for the team. They cannot allow the 'masculine lesbian' image to be publicised. Instead, they attempt to suppress it, and in so doing, force some members of their team to be marginalised.

This too is problematic because of the importance of the team to everyone. If one player or several players can be marginalised, it places the entire team unity under threat, and in turn renders the freedom bought by the team as a group, and the confidence enjoyed by the team as individuals, unstable. Because of this, the Jesters are unable to fully embrace either a heterosexual face or a fully independent identity. Ultimately, they cannot resolve the ambiguity of their gender identity.

This lack of resolution must, however, be dealt with. This is done through the use of the national ambiguity of the team. The team must find an identity which all team members can be part of without excluding others, and which also links them with the wider community of Bordertown. They find this identity in their ambiguous national identity.

Chapter 6:
Sitting on the fence of national identity

> Me? I'm sitting right on the fence here, I am. Honestly . . . I support Scotland at rugby, England at football and . . . my mum's English, my dad's Scottish, I was born in England. . . I live in Scotland. I would probably say I'm English but by just, right on, you know 51-49 or something. Apart from in rugby terms, but I think if I played rugby in England I would say I . . . definitely . . . would support England, but you know, playing in the Scottish club scene you tend to know more about the Scottish game than the English game, so I would say probably just English. . . Unless I was . . . in the middle of a dodgy little Scottish village. I would probably say I was probably Scottish then but unless I was feeling threatened I would probably admit I thought of myself as English. But . . . us Borderers think we're a breed of our own you see?
>
> (Michael)

Chapters 4 and 5 discussed the difficulties faced by the Jesters in attempting to manage their ambiguous gender identity. I argued that ultimately it proved to be impossible for them to integrate the masculine identity of being rugby players with the feminine identity of being women. At the end of Chapter 5, I suggested that one final strategy for identity management was available to them - that of distraction. This means that the Jesters may be able to manage their gender identity by drawing attention away from it. In order for this to be successful they needed to be able to attract attention towards another of their identities which is potentially problematic, but which is manageable. In order for this strategy to work, it is necessary that the Jesters possess a further identity which is sufficiently problematic. Fortunately for them, this identity is found in their national identity.

This chapter establishes the national identity of Bordertown as being ambiguous. As such, it is problematic to the community of Bordertown and to the national communities of England and Scotland, and has the potential to marginalise the inhabitants of Bordertown and cause anxiety to the national communities. In order to minimise the social costs of such an identity, the Bordertown community must establish itself as belonging to both the English and Scottish communities, whilst maintaining its distinction. The inhabitants of the town in

general do this by embracing the ambiguity, and performing it as a specifically local identity. This local identity is based upon ambiguity and distinctiveness.

The success or otherwise of this strategy depends on the community's ability to link themselves with the larger communities surrounding them, but also to maintain their distinctiveness. If this is done, Bordertown's ambiguity ceases to be a threat, and becomes a unique selling point for the community instead. It also provides the inhabitants of Bordertown with a way of defending themselves against marginalisation, in the same way the Jesters protect their members. One of the ways that these aims is achieved is through the use of sport. This chapter therefore looks at the relationship of the rugby club to the town, and how this functions to link the town to the rest of British society while also symbolically 'defending' its independence. Finally, the role of representatives is briefly discussed, an issue which leads into Chapter 7, and the importance of representation for the Jesters.

National identity is presented as being manageable because of the local identity in Bordertown - an identity which is accepted as being ambiguous and distinctive. Because this is acceptable, the Jesters must establish themselves as belonging to the identity, accepted as locals and representatives of the local community. If this is done, they are then able to perform their ambiguous national identity as a way of deflecting attention away from their gender identity.

Again, the crucial concepts here are those of inclusion and belonging and exclusion and marginalisation. In this case, the marginalisation is overcome through the embrace of ambiguity and the use of sport as a means of promoting and legitimising the local identity. It is for these reasons that the national identity of the Jesters is so important, and the reason they express their national identity so vehemently.

National ambiguities - places on the border

Bordertown's national ambiguity was briefly discussed in Chapter 3, where the town was established as being socially distinct in the minds of its inhabitants and others. This is because Bordertown occupies an ambiguous place in the national imaginations of both England and Scotland. In this, it is similar to other border communities in that it possesses and displays some of the national characteristics of both, but is not fully accepted by either (Frankenberg, 1957; Kiely *et al.*, 2000; Larsen, 1982; Wilson and Donnan, 1998). Unlike

others, however, the Bordertown community combines the characteristics, allowing the town to develop a distinctive fused and ambiguous identity.

As we have seen, identities depend on the social processes of inclusion and exclusion for their maintenance. National identity is no exception, and the process of exclusion is often more clearly expressed by the use of territorial borders than is possible within other identities. The territorial element of national identity is perceived as being central to the development and expression of national identity, which results in enormous significance being placed on these borders - where there is territorial sovereignty, there must also be borders which exclude those who are not members of the community (Billig, 1997: 61; Gellner, 1994: 4; Smith, 1991: 14). The existence of these territorial borders represents a physical manifestation of the social boundaries which exist around all identities.

These borders, although efficiently partitioning off the national community from outsiders, may also cause problems. In the modern world, these national borders leave little room for flexibility, and community membership becomes a matter of location as well as social acceptance:

> In the modern nationalist imagination, one national territory does not shade into another. Nations stop and start abruptly at demarcated borders.
>
> (Billig, 1997: 74)

For many in the national community, this is part of the security which the borders provide. The sense of 'Otherness', and hence of 'Us-ness' is given by the borders, which in turn reinforces the sense of community among the majority of the national community. Borders, and border communities, have a dual role to play in the national imagination:

> The social 'Other' of the marginal and the low cultures is despised and reviled in the official discourse of the dominant culture and central power while at the same time being constitutive of the imaginary and emotional repertoires of that dominant culture.
>
> (Shields, 1992: 5)

Border communities are therefore crucial to the imaginations of the rest of the national communities because they are the furthest extent of these communities. As Shields notes, this means they represent the place where the national identity becomes insecure, and where

community membership becomes unclear. As such, they are 'reviled' and rejected, and their inhabitants marginalised.

This perception of border communities is, perhaps, understandable. Although territory may be neatly partitioned using maps and signposts, human society does not operate quite so tidily. People who live on the borders often develop close ties with their neighbours (Wilson and Donnan, 1998: 4), and the border for them does not exist as a demarcation, but rather as a part of their lives requiring constant and skillful negotiation. Such is the case in Bordertown.

As a result of this, Bordertown has a complex relationship with the national communities of both England and Scotland. Its inhabitants are perceived as outsiders, who are also somehow members of the larger community. This is one of the ways the situation of the Jesters may be seen. The following section expands on this theme, looking at the ways in which Bordertown is viewed by those from outside the community, before turning to how the people in Bordertown view themselves.

Ambiguity in Bordertown - inside out and outside in

Bordertown is classified as being ambiguous and unique both by the insiders of Bordertown community, and by those outside. Ironically, many of those from the outside are those living in Bordertown itself, who feel a strong sense of not belonging to Bordertown because they themselves have no ambiguity about their nationality. The sense of difference, and indeed distance, from both the Scottish and English national identities and communities, felt by inhabitants of Bordertown is palpable. Despite their pride in their ambiguity, there is still a sense in which Bordertown's inhabitants feel like misfits:

> I don't know . . . when we go to Bigtown, they say we speak Scottish, we're Scottish, and when we go to Scotston, they say we're English . . . It works both ways . . . We're actually on the borderline.
>
> (David)

> We're just somewhere in-between somehow. . . We talk different to anyone else. . . . You know? Half and half.
>
> (Richard)

People in Bordertown live at the point where 'We' become' Them'. As a result, they have an identity which is based on a lack of belonging and a deep sense of difference. Comments such as these imply a great sense of being outside, on the margins, of not belonging among people living in Bordertown.

This is echoed by people who have moved into Bordertown from elsewhere in Britain and by casual comments made by visitors. Such comments tend to assert that Bordertown belongs to neither England nor Scotland, that it is somehow 'foreign'. This lack of belonging can be considered as a form of national identity in itself:

> They wouldn't class themselves as Tooners [slang name for people from the region surrounding Bigtown], put it that way. If they had to name the nearest city, they'd put themselves as from Bigton I guess. But when they go abroad, they're Bordertowners.
>
> (Evan)

Evan, an incomer, is stating a commonly held belief among outsiders of Bordertown. It is a view which is accepted and cherished by the Bordertown community as well. The sense of difference in Bordertown is evident when discussing national identity with its inhabitants. Although they are all able to identify themselves as either Scottish or English, they are also from Bordertown. The idea that they are caught in-between two different identities is common and has bred a sense of distinctiveness and exclusivity:

> Bordertown's got its own language and its own, its own everything. People say, people come from Bigtown and say it's like living in a foreign country.
>
> (William)

William's qualification of his difference is interesting. He does not have a problem seeing himself as being English. However, his statement implies that others do have a difficulty - that Bordertown cannot be unproblematically accepted as English or Scottish, but rather must be considered slightly different.

This implies that Bordertown is regarded with some uneasiness. As a community it cannot be regarded as belonging to either England or Scotland, and so is given the label of 'foreign'. Entirely alien to both England and Scotland, the identity of Bordertown is something which

exists outside the 'Us' and 'Them' dynamic of the border. This results in the social exclusion of those living in Bordertown.

As shown by the Jesters, managing exclusion when caused by ambiguity is not easy. However, the strategy adopted by many of the people from Bordertown is to accept and embrace the ambiguity. This represents a contrast to the strategies of the Jesters. They accept their marginalisation, but realise that in so doing, they also place themselves in a position of power and create the opportunity to exert some control over how others perceive them. It is a strategy which is adopted by other marginalised groups, particularly those who possess a socially stigmatised identity and occupy a relatively powerless position in the social hierarchy (Elias, 1977: xxviii). By developing a cohesive group which then performs the ambiguity expected of them, they are able to deflect criticism, gain some social acceptance, and also regain control over their identity, achieving a measure of freedom in the process.

In many ways, Michael exemplifies the situation of people in Bordertown. Conscious of his own ambiguity, he is able to use national identity as a way of gaining social advantage, or saving himself in a potentially awkward social situation. Thus, if English nationality was perceived to be somewhat risky, he would be able to choose to perform the Scottish identity instead, and not necessarily feel that this was in any way contravening his own sense of who he was. It is precisely this ability to choose which identity is appropriate which causes unease in the rest of the national communities. However, the final sentence is itself revealing, because he classifies himself as a 'Borderer', and therefore as someone who is neither English nor Scottish - a breed apart. In asserting this separation, he is performing an identity which is recognised in Scotland and England as being distinct. Because of this recognition, he is also able to be ambiguous about his national identity without causing more anxiety. His ambiguity is an accepted part of his recognised local identity.

This is sense of distinction is reinforced by the tendency of some to identify themselves as being from Bordertown first, and then identifying themselves nationally. Kieran is one example:

> If somebody asked me where I was from if I was in a foreign country, I would say, obviously England, because Bordertown is situated in England, um, and then I would explain that I was from Bordertown or whatever.
>
> (Kieran)

Kieran's identity is a blend of both English and being from Bordertown. Thus, although he claims English identity, this is qualified by his claim of Bordertown identity. This potentially problematises his claim of national identity for outsiders, but also meets their scepticism by asserting his ambiguity. Bordertown is acknowledged to be ambiguous, and therefore its inhabitants are granted a certain amount of flexibility in their identity claims. He does not see one identity, that is being English or being from Bordertown, as being more important than the other. Rather, they exist on an equal footing, reinforcing again the importance for locals of being from Bordertown. It also reflects the continuous surveillance of national identity in Bordertown, which can result in some interesting social interactions.

For example, one result of this concentration on national identity is that everything in Bordertown is interpreted through the visor of national identity. Even outsiders, such as myself, are interpreted this way. I didn't realise this myself till in conversation with one of the other players. We were talking about how I behaved when I first joined the team. I was very quiet, and reserved, often because I was afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing, and sometimes also because I didn't actually understand what was going on around me. I wrote down later that the woman had thought that I was becoming more accepted as I 'came out of my shell' (I suspect that the large quantities of alcohol consumed had something to do with that particular development). She had initially been a bit worried about my apparent reluctance to take part fully in the team, but had put it down to national differences, rather than my apparent lack of social skills. To have my behaviour interpreted through an explicitly national framework was unexpected, yet revealing. Australians in Bordertown, I fear, are likely to be seen as reserved, quiet and uncomfortable!

This emphasises the importance of national identity in Bordertown. It is important because it is ambiguous and this ambiguity causes anxiety. As a result of this, it is in the interests of people in Bordertown, and those outside, to be able to establish which category someone belongs to. Although in my case, it was relatively simple. My accent alone made it clear that I was neither English nor Scottish. But this is not so simple with the majority of people

in Bordertown, particularly when it is sometimes more advantageous for an individual to be ambiguous.

Establishing identity in Bordertown - the use of identity markers

The key to handling, performing and legitimating this ambiguity lies in the skilful use and interpretation of 'identity markers'. Because of the ambiguity inherent in Bordertown's national identity, the inhabitants have developed complex ways of establishing and justifying their own nationality. These are known as 'identity markers', and refer to the signs and symbols people look for in an individual to establish identity. In Bordertown, these are used creatively in order to blur the issue of national identity, and allow locals in Bordertown to identify themselves but also assert membership of the larger national community they feel closest to. As will be seen, one of the most important of these markers, in the context of Bordertown, is sport.

Research done on identity markers, and the basis for making national identity claims (Kiely *et al.*, 2000) shows that:

> birth, upbringing, ancestral ties and place of residence are the most powerful markers of national identity. If someone were to make a claim based on these markers then it would generally be accepted and upheld by others in almost all circumstances.
>
> (Kiely *et al.*, 2000: 4.5)

It is true that people in Bordertown do make identity claims based on such markers, which others accept unproblematically. However, things are rarely that straightforward even for these individuals. The identity marker used by one may be entirely discounted by someone else in favour of another.

For example, Kieran, Jared and Dave all agree that place of birth and the fact that Bordertown is in England makes claiming English nationality relatively unproblematic. This is not to say that there are not occasional hitches. Place of birth is particularly important:

> When you're English . . . there's no real choice . . . You can't just say, right mam, get over the border and pop us out there . . . you're born wherever you are, so wherever you're born . . .But not in my case, because I was born in Malta.
>
> (Dave)

This is an interesting passage because of the inherent contradiction in what Dave is saying. Taken from a conversation with three men, all of whom were English, in Bordertown, it shows the importance of social context in determining which identity markers are to be used. All three men live in Bordertown, and so negotiate the border as a part of their daily life. The other two men were born in England, and so all three agreed that they could define themselves as unproblematically English because of this. Curiously, Dave seems to have thought this applied to him as well, until a sudden recollection causes him to shift his ground - he was born in Malta. As a result of this accident of birth, he must find alternative ways to support his claims to English national identity. As a result of his living in Bordertown, this is not difficult to do. Instead he relies on his ancestry, the fact that his parents are English, to claim his identity.

This is contradicted by Kieran, who blends the ties of blood with those of location, resulting in an interesting shift in his claims to national identity. His family is an interesting mix of English and Scottish but he himself was born in England. He begins his claim to English national identity by claiming birth as being primary, and then begins to explain:

> My grandmother's Scottish but that, like, but . . . let's get this right. My father's Scottish right, with a Scottish family. My mother, who's English, has a Scottish family. . . As you gradually work down the family tree, you (*Laughs*) wind up with me! And hopefully . . . my kids will be English. . . Obviously I have Scottish and English blood in me but, no I've just always considered myself English. I've never asked my mum, am I English, I've just assumed that I am.
>
> (Kieran)

This passage seems to contradict Dave's claims to English national identity. Kieran, should he work with Dave's criteria, would be defined as being Scottish because the majority of his family are Scottish. He himself sees himself as being English, partly because he was born there, and also because of his mother. It is unclear how his mother claims her national identity because it would appear that she rejects ancestry as being important in establishing

her national identity. Kieran seems to reject these while also asserting them through his mother. They are also used in his hope that his children will also be English. As Kieran was living in Scotland at the time of the interview, and may well end up living anywhere he can find work, this seems curious. In allowing himself to choose his national identity, he then rejects this choice for his children, asserting instead the importance of blood and ancestry. As a result of his identity, his children will also be English.

The concern with issues such as how to assert and claim a national identity reflects a need on the part of people from Bordertown to associate themselves with a larger national community. For them, however, the 'normal' identity markers used by others are not as simple and so a blend of them must be used. One common way around the difficulty of claiming membership of a national community is to use support of a particular sports team to support identity claims.

Like Michael, who supports Scotland in rugby and England in football, Kieran's choice of national identity and his explanation of this choice is also influenced by sporting results. When asked if there was anything which would make him claim Scottish identity he said no:

> Maybe if they was winning the rugby. (*Laughs*) No, I don't think so! . . . I could play for Scotland. . . I wouldn't want to though. They're terrible! I wouldn't want to play! *Laughs*.

He is eligible to play for both England and Scotland, but chooses to identify himself as being English. His analysis of Scottish rugby, and his reason for not wanting to be associated with them first is due to their performance, particularly when compared to England. Given the two options, the more successful team is the more appealing. This type of strategy is really only successful for individuals who, like Kieran, have the option of choosing a national identity. Otherwise, people are more likely to ignore the sport, than take it up (Johnes, 2000: 95).

Gary expresses another series of justifications for why he identifies himself the way he does. He was born in England, but asserts Scottish national identity because of his parents and because of where he went to school. But sport is identified as a vital part of his identity claims:

> Obviously, I was born in England and lived in England, apart from when I was at school, so I'm definitely Scottish. . . I always look at it from a sport angle. If Scotland played England, it would definitely be Scotland all the time. If England played another country, I wouldn't say I'd support England but . . . I don't hate them and I don't wish the other country to win. So, it is important to a certain extent, but I'm not, I don't go over the top by any means.

Gary does not see his national identity as being open for negotiation in the way that Kieran and Michael do. Although the latter are not ambiguous about their national identity, one senses some flexibility in the way that they present themselves. This type of flexibility is not present in Gary. It represents a difference in the ways in which English and Scottish identifying people see themselves.

Ciara is English, but is prepared to support Scotland in external competitions:

> I mean, I know what I am, and I'm English. I play for a Scottish team. So we . . . I support both really, if you want to know. Kind of support Ireland and Wales as well. . . . No, I mean if it came to push and shove, if it were Scotland and England in a football match or whatever, or World Cup, I'm going to obviously support England. . . . But if it was Scotland and somebody else, I'd support Scotland.

As England tends to be more successful than Scotland, it is easier for the English fans to support Scotland, as the Scots do not constitute much of a threat. For Scots, such as Gary, this flexibility is not possible. This flexibility may be taken to extremes, as individuals may well use their support of a national sports team to indicate their alienation from their national identity.

For example, Bill is English, but chooses to support Scotland for this very reason:

> And you can watch them on the tellie and hear people talking about them, whatever game is being played . . . It annoys me that, so many commentators, and England this and England that. You never hear them talking about Scotland . . . You can be watching Man U/Newcastle and they'll be talking about England . . . All the programmes, they're talking about England . . . I get tired . . . . I support Scotland. Cheer Scotland on when they're playing. . .

> Probably because they're losers. . . you know they're never going to win. . . but they'll put their hearts into it. . . . But I'm English.

Overexposure to the English national team, and the fact that confidence may be read as arrogance has resulted in Bill choosing to support Scotland over England, despite the fact that he identifies himself as being English.

This type of rivalry, and the overconfidence of English teams is often projected onto English supporters and adds a certain spice to the inter-national rivalries in the club. This was underlined again by an incident I was part of whilst watching the Six Nations rugby tournament. Scotland were playing Ireland and England, France. It seemed fairly certain that Scotland were going to lose, and sure enough they did. But, crucially, so did England, which denied them the Grand Slam (an unbeaten run through the competition). One of the English players in the group turned to the Scots and commented that Scotland had lost. Again. A Scot turned around and said:

> It doesn't matter! England lost, so they've lost the Grand Slam!

The fact that Scotland are, as Bill said, "losers", is accepted by Scottish fans. In this instance, all that really mattered was the fact that France had beaten England, denying them glory.

Bethany is another example, explicitly choosing a Scottish identity, despite the fact that most of her identity markers point in the other direction. She is one of the most vocally nationalistic of all of the Jesters. This implies that for her, national identity is essentially a choice which is made in response to a rejection of a different identity, rather than an affirmation of another. In this case, her family consider themselves to be English, they live in England, and she was born in England. She has never lived north of the border. Despite this:

> My last name is Campbell. That is a Scottish name. I must have Scottish ancestors somewhere. And also cause the history of Bordertown, ah the way it's changed hands all the time. . . There was a war fought and Scotland won it which would have meant that we would have been Scottish, but because there wasn't a royal figure or something in the town, it didn't count. . . I'm, I'm not against the English. I

> don't like the English rugby team, mind, but I'm not against the English. But . . . I like the idea of Great Britain. But I, I don't like the Southerners' attitude towards Scotland, England and Wales. I mean Ireland and Wales. I don't like that attitude and I think that's kind of drawn me away from them. . . My granddad told me that obviously we used to be Scottish so, I'm Scottish, as far as I'm concerned. My family don't think that like, and they don't like it, but I just ignore them 'Ah, just go away.'. (*Laughs*) But Bordertown's like that, they're half-castes. They're all English but they're either Scottish or English depending. . . I think Scotland's great . . . I like the people. . . . I love the Irish people, I love the Welsh people, I do like the majority of the English people, but there's some English people I just think are horrible. . . . You know, and I don't like them and they're so arrogant. And I'm not saying they're not like that in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, but they are really prominent in England and I don't like it. . . I prefer the Scottish rugby shirt anyway.

Despite claiming a Scottish identity, she admits that she is English. She is seen by most other people as being English. In fact, all of her team mates consider her to be English, not Scottish. And by most markers, she would appear to be English. She lives in England, was born in England, and her family is English. Yet she asserts her Scottish identity, claiming ancestry (her surname), and history, with the fact that the border has moved so many times that she might as well be Scottish. The element of choice is evident too in her assertion that she doesn't like the English because some of the are 'horrible'. Her preference for the rugby shirt of Scotland as well indicates an element of choice, and possibly also the desire for a fashionable identity. This may be seen as an image of how national identity works on borders - one can choose one's identity as simply as pulling on one shirt or another, depending on situation. This is undercut by her assertion that you can't choose your identity. You are who you are. This results in her invocation of a separate British identity as a way of distancing herself from an English identity. In doing this, she minimises the distance between Scottish and English identity, pulling them together under one larger banner: British identity.

In this example, she also has the right to claim birth to be her reason for choosing national identity, but rejects it instead. This is an explicit rejection of how she understands English national identity, preferring instead to be considered Scottish because of her ancestry.

It is significant that whilst comments were made, usually with some frustration, by her team mates regarding her English/ Scottish identity, none ever attempted to argue with her about it. It seemed to be a courtesy extended to her that she should be able to choose her identity in the same way as others in Bordertown did.

Kiely *et al* (2000: 4.9) identify things such as accent, a history of ambiguity (2000: 4.12) and geographical proximity to one national community and relative isolation from the centre of the other (2000: 4.18) as being causes of national ambiguity for some communities. We can see, then, that developing and defending a sense of national identity in border communities such as Bordertown is highly dependent on how other people perceive the community and the extent to which people are able to accept identity claims. Therefore, Bethany is able to make the claims she does by drawing on Bordertown's history of ambiguity and her ancestry, as well as her accent which can be identified as either English or Scottish. Equally, Michael can claim either identity with no problems.

This introduction of sport implies its importance in Bordertown and its frequent use by Bordertown inhabitants as an identity marker. The ability of an individual to establish which team they support is generally accepted as being indicative of which national identity they possess. However, as has been indicated throughout, this is not simple. As shown at the start of the chapter with Michael, he has some difficulty establishing himself as being either English or Scottish. Ultimately, he does this through a decision regarding which national sport team he supports. However, unlike the others, he cannot seem to decide. In footballing terms he is English, but for rugby he is Scottish. He claims that this is because of his involvement with Scottish rugby, and implies the ways in which Bordertown is able to be linked into other communities through sport, and in particular, with the rest of the national community.

Sport, local identity and representation

As a response to the marginalisation and exclusion implied above, and the confusion as to where they actually belong, the inhabitants of Bordertown have developed a strong local identity. This operates in a similar way to the team identity expressed by the Jesters, protecting individuals in the group from social isolation and giving them support in their ambiguity. Although outsiders may classify them as being different, people in Bordertown

have internalised this difference, and developed a sense of exclusion to others as well. One of the ways that this is expressed is through sports teams, and in particular, who is accepted as being a legitimate representative of the community. This is important, as representatives must be accepted as being members of the community. This is so that the community is linked to the larger society, but in a way which preserves its distinctiveness.

This exclusion of 'outsiders' is often symbolically expressed, through discussions of physical exclusion to the defence of the community through sport or fighting. This symbolic dimension is best illustrated in a discussion with a group of footballers about who belonged or did not belong to Bordertown:

> Barry: Well, Bordertown's really what's within the Bordertown walls isn't it?
> Carl and Richard: Shut the gates
> Carl: At what time?
> Richard: Six o'clock?
> Barry: Didn't shut it early enough did they? Some of them got through!

Referring to the old walls surrounding Bordertown, which used to mark the edges of the settlement proper, this discussion implies the continuing importance of belonging and local identity to the people of Bordertown. The exclusion, originally physical, and symbolised by the shutting of the gates each evening to keep outsiders out, has continued in the symbolic discussion of shutting others out. Although this is no longer physical, it still occurs in a social sense, in that gates to the community are still shut to people coming in. Bordertown is no longer as exclusive as it once was, implied by Barry's final comment that "some of them (outsiders) got through". But there is also the sense that these outsiders have diluted the Bordertown identity, changing its nature slightly and making those original locals more defensive, and also that these outsiders are still 'them', not 'us'. A clear split still exists in Bordertown.

This local identity may be read as a defense mechanism. Because of it, the community is effectively self-sufficient and non-reliant on the national communities surrounding them. In order for this to be effective, it is necessary for the local identity in Bordertown to be strictly policed, with membership controlled to preserve the integrity of the community. This is behaviour which is found among other communities who are characterised by strong local

affiliation. Who a local is, when an individual is accepted and in what contexts are all important in determining how a person operates in Bordertown.

Gilligan's analysis of community relations in Padstow, and the designation of 'local', 'visitor' or 'outsider' status, was illuminating in this respect. In this context, 'visitor' status was seen as being familiar, as Padstow had a long history of passing trade and seasonal workers, and more recently tourists, which renders this identity unproblematic (1987: 76). These individuals do not become part of the community, and as such can be safely disregarded in the community's life. In Bordertown, I believe that this is the role played by myself. 'Outsiders', however, are difficult because they live within the boundaries of the community and stay there, unlike the visitors. They help define what the community is by symbolising what the community is not (Gilligan, 1987: 77). They exist, therefore, on the margins of the community. But how these identities are defined is not simple. Localness may be defined as being able to exist within the boundaries of the community, within the town walls so to speak. But a considerable amount of flexibility and the blurring of boundaries exists within this identity.

This is seen especially in who is accepted as being a community representative. As argued above, sport is used to link individuals and Bordertown itself to other communities, particularly national communities But it is also used to represent Bordertown's own identity. Establishing who is accepted as representative of Bordertown is illuminating in terms of how 'localness' is defined, and how Bordertown is perceived by those outside.

Kieran has moved away from Bordertown to study and is unlikely to return. His family are still based there:

> Kieran: Um, obviously if I went back there, this summer or whatever, you know, I'd go and know a lot of people, so yeah, somebody could say 'There's a local', um. . . Yeah, before I started uni I'd say yeah I was local, but I'm gradually moving away from the idea.
> F.G.: Why is that? Because you don't want to be a part of that scene any more or is it a natural process?
> Kieran: Natural and also I'm, there's not a great deal in Bordertown. You know, I could never work there.

Kieran's sense of where he belongs is determined by three main things. First, where he was born, which was in Bordertown. Second, where he grew up or his knowledge of the place and the people. Third where he currently lives. That is his local status is dependent on the continual renewing of social bonds, something which he can do only through the rugby club or occasional visits down. This begins to imply the importance of local sports teams in renewing local identity, as well as validating it to outsiders. This is a community with teams to represent it.

This is not an uncommon phenomenon among communities. National sports teams have been established as important in symbolising the nation. Teams are equally important to smaller communities as well (Frankenberg, 1957: 102; Hill, 1999; Mosely, 1997). That they are accepted as such is shown through the behaviour of the players themselves and how they are perceived by their opponents. The interplay between the deliberate playing up of Bordertown's ambiguity and their own sense of who they are is best expressed on the sporting field. It is here that they come into conflict, albeit symbolic, with opposing teams. Each team, therefore, comes to represent a national group, and the teams from Bordertown are no exception.

People dealt with the comments in various ways. Most often it seemed to either be accepted because the comments tallied with the individuals' own sense of identity, or retaliation because they didn't:

> It were a few year ago when Alex were playing . . . we were playing up in Scotston . . . and the lads up at Scotston . . . you know what they're like . . . Alex stopped with the ball and he says, 'I'm more Scottish than you! I was born in Edinburgh!' And away he went with the ball again!

In this example, the footballer was able to reassert his own identity and then to reaffirm it by a display of skill in response to comments from the sidelines. In this example, we can see sport providing a context for discussion about the ambiguity of Bordertown and where the community belongs. It also represents an opportunity for an individual to negate his ambiguity and assert his national membership.

One crucial aspect of this relationship between sport, local identity, national identity and inclusion is the selection of appropriate representatives for the community. In Chapter 1, I

argued that athletes become inhabited by the national community, such that their behaviour and identity had to be accepted and validated by the community they represented. The same holds true for representatives of smaller communities as well. The sport selected and who plays the sport are vital if the team is to represent the community effectively, defending its individualism as well as integrating it with the larger community.

Things are not always this straightforward, however, particularly in the example of the United Kingdom. In this context, each nation has a separate sports team, but the state also has one (Moorhouse, 1995: 57). Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland all field their own football teams for example. It might be as well to note here that this applies only to football. In rugby, as in some other sports, Northern Ireland competes as part of the Republic of Ireland, for events such as the Olympics, all countries compete as one team, Great Britain, but athletes from Northern Ireland may well compete in the Republic's team or vice versa. Things are particularly complicated in the case of hockey, where players may potentially be picked for both Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland, resulting in some quick decisions needing to be made regarding team selection, and by the athletes themselves regarding which team was more likely to further their sporting careers (Sugden and Bairner, 1993: 65). There is nothing simple about such an arrangement in bureaucratic terms, and for the people involved, things are also a little bit confused as far as their identities go as well. Leaving such complications aside for a moment, however, it can be seen that for people living in Bordertown, support for a particular team is a useful way of identifying themselves as members of one or another national community.

In the case of rugby in Bordertown, things are also not simple. In addition to issues of eligibility experienced by many players, rugby also has a marginal position in Bordertown itself. Although the Scottish borders are well known as being the 'home' of rugby in Scotland, and an area where football plays a relatively small role, Bordertown's main sport is football, with a total of five clubs existing. In contrast, only one rugby club is present in Bordertown. In addition, most of the spectator interest in Bordertown is towards football:

> [W]ell it's mostly a football place, Bordertown. If you go out to watch rugby on the tellie you've got to *ask* for it to be shown cause in most pubs it's just football all the time. It's no very much a rugby town like, no even for the men.
>
> (Emily)

Football is a given. This is in contrast to other towns in the Borders, where rugby is natural. Certainly the Jesters tended to assume that if they wanted to watch international matches they were better travelling to one of the other towns in the area than staying in Bordertown. This implies that Bordertown is more likely to accept a football team than a rugby team as its representative. This results in potential difficulties for the club in terms of attracting interest and resources from the town.

The club is also geographically distinct from the town, situated at a distance of some six or seven miles. Although the players are drawn from all classes, and so may be considered to represent a fair cross-section of the town, most of them are not from Bordertown itself. Many are drawn from the surrounding areas. In addition to this, many of the first (Men's) team no longer live either in or near Bordertown, preferring to travel back each week to train and play. As a result of this - the lack of interest in rugby in Bordertown, the physical and social distance of the club, and the ambiguity of the status of players, it has a strange relationship with the town:

> Well, the rugby club there's a lot of people who are not actually from Bordertown, you know there's a mixture of folk from a right lot of places. Bordertown probably has its own identity. Ummm. . . . but certainly not the rugby club.
>
> (Liam)

This implies that the relationship between the club and the town is not as simple as might be thought. Although the club still operates as a representative of the town, particularly to outsiders, it seems that it does not necessarily 'belong' to the town. The players are not necessarily from there, and Liam believes that the club itself is not necessarily 'Bordertown'. As a local himself, he is sensitive to such nuances. There is a difference, then, between public representation, and the full acceptance and ownership of the club. In what sense, then, can the rugby club be accepted as being a representative of the town?

One reason is because of the contrast evident with one of the larger football teams. This team, known as the 'Bordertown Bombers', plays semi-professionally, and provides a stark contrast to the rugby club. In this example, the fact that most of the rugby players are not from the town itself is secondary because they come from the local area and are not professional. In contrast, the footballers are not from the local area, and are also paid to

play. There is no sense in which the town feels connected to them, and so support is lacking among many townsfolk:

> Richard: You'd have to look hard to find anyone local who supports Bordertown Bombers . . .
> F.G.: Why?
> Carl: Because there's no local lads -
> Richard: Play for Bordertown -
> Carl: They don't get the chance to play for Bordertown.
> Richard: I think the main team is all from Scotston -
> Barry: They train at Scotston.

Although the team plays under the name of 'Bordertown, it is a team which in no way relates to the town itself. Its players are not from the area, and the locals feel no connection to it. In particular, there are comments about the team's lack of success and the perceived lack of effort on the part of the players:

> You could basically pick a team of Bordertown lads who would do better than them . . . and that's the truth . . .You prob'ly could because . . . they'd gie more effort.
>
> (Barry)

Because the players feel no connection to the town, they do not put the same effort in that local players, playing for their home town would. As a result, the players are not accepted as representatives of the town.

This in part explains why the rugby club is accepted as representative, when the Bombers are not. Because they have resisted the temptation to import players, the success or failure of the rugby club rests on the shoulders of players the town knows. This was an aspect of the club's identity which players and members are especially proud of. 'Foreign' players, those coming from outside the British Isles and particularly to players from the Southern Hemisphere in Scottish rugby, are also usually paid by their clubs. There were no such players playing for Bordertown during the time I was there. The core of the club are known to each other through family connections or through rugby. This leads to a sense of contempt for other clubs, particularly those who tend to 'import' their players:

> [B]eating teams that, it's nice beating teams in our league that basically pay their players and you know that drives, I think that drives a lot of our team just to know that we're

> doing that for our fun, you know, it's our hobby whereas these guys are paying their coaches a lot of money, getting guys over from abroad and things which, I wouldn't agree with personally but it's a good, it's a good drive for us to just to win, to play well.
>
> (Michael)

Not only are Bordertown playing for the community, then, but they are also playing for the 'purity' of the Scottish game, nurturing Scottish talent. This is a view expressed by players, though only obliquely, and always surprised me somewhat. I had felt that the introduction of players from elsewhere was a good thing because it forced the development of rugby as a sport by having better players lift the standard of the game. However, resentment exists across Scottish rugby generally about the professionalisation of rugby and the opportunities given to foreign players at the expense of Scots in order to allow clubs to play at higher levels. This ethos set Bordertown up against a slightly different attitude in the game to other clubs playing in their division. Rugby is becoming increasingly professional and as a result, increasingly lucrative. Clubs, in their desire to push their team up through the Leagues, are tending to bring in professional players from outside Britain to play one or two seasons at the club. Bordertown's resistance to this importation gives their competitiveness an extra kick.

As a result of this local and British nature, I was a very visible presence, known to some of the men as simply 'Aussie'. The split was not one simply of nationality, however, but was more an attitude towards professionalism in the game and the paying of players. As a result, although I was foreign (and worse still, Australian) I was considered 'one of them' by my team mates, if not the rest of the town because I was playing for the town and not being paid for it. I was a 'representative', although I was not local. The club is, therefore, closer to the town than the football team. As a result, the definition of 'localness' and the status of 'outsider' can be stretched in order to fit the need. Although the club does not have a particularly close relationship with the town, it is still accepted as being a local institution and a legitimate representative of the town.

One factor which assisted in this acceptance of the rugby club was the fact that many of the players, though not necessarily from the town itself, were well known in Bordertown, most of them having been to school there or having grown up playing for the club. As a result, people in the town, who still live there and who are not involved with rugby know the

players and mix with them on a regular basis either professionally or socially, partly also because of the relationship the players have with the club and the town. Chapter 3 explored some of the local institutional networks in Bordertown and how people know others through them. Through rugby, it is possible to tap into one of these networks and become known and accepted in the town. The rugby club is one of the social centres of the town, with rugby club parties open to everyone.

The fact that Bordertown's reputation for being insular and separate is associated with the rugby club has tended to encourage a tendency to promote the club as a tight, unified place. The unity is encouraged by the fact that many of the male players have grown up playing for the club, fathers and sons have played there, and many of the social bonds forged through rugby at Bordertown are the reason so many players travel considerable distances to play there.

Gary is one player who might be considered typical. As a student, he lives away from Bordertown, but travels back three times a week for playing and training. This is a round trip which takes him about six hours every time. He started playing at Bordertown because his father was involved, a pattern repeated for three or four other members I spoke to. He continues playing because of the social ties he has to the club:

> [W]e've kind of grown up together kind of thing. Now, well, a lot of the first team's sort of really young. we're all the same age, so you know, everybody's grown up, pretty much together.

The continuity of the experience, from father to son, and with groups of friends growing up playing together, is one of the defining features of this club. This is a process which is replicated, albeit on a smaller scale, with the Jesters. The original team members had male relatives, husbands, brothers or cousins, involved with the club and so were introduced to rugby through them. Obviously the means of introduction varied:

> [M]y two cousins played and they used to kind of practice on me when I was about five, and I was very foolish and stood in the middle of a field and got tackled and tackled and tackled. . . [A]ll my family really quite like rugby. I think because I was . . . going to watch a lot of my male friends play, I traveled with them a lot to watch them and I

> used to always ask for a game. I think I was probably very tomboyish and then when they started up the team I thought I'll have a shot at that. *(Laughs)*
>
> (Bethany)

Although Bethany's introduction to rugby is somewhat earlier than all of the women, and most of the men, there is very little difference between her experiences and those of men her age. However, the men were able to continue playing rugby whereas Bethany had to take her chance much later. The social and kin links with the sport and the club are still there, and are very important. Bonds are made both within the club, to be strengthened outside, or existing bonds are reinforced through rugby.

In some senses, the rugby club shares the problem of the Bombers. Most of its players are not from the town, as Liam points out. Rather they are from the surrounding countryside which, as has been seen, does not necessarily make them 'locals' in the town itself. The fact that many of the first team male rugby players live away from the town, travelling back to play means that their relationship with the town is slightly different, more like the footballers of the Bordertown Bombers. And the women are different. Not only are they playing a 'man's sport', as discussed in the previous two chapters, but they are also drawn from both inside and outside Bordertown. Although they are still 'locals' in that they are known and accepted within the town, for the men especially, there is a sense of the world beyond Bordertown, a sense which colours their relationship to the town. However, the club has developed a sense of itself as being 'local' in contrast to the Bordertown Bombers, by developing a strong sense of loyalty to the club, and embracing the ambiguous national identity of the town itself.

The rugby club therefore plays a role in maintaining the town's local identity by drawing people back to it. There is a conscious policy of doing this in the club, with young students encouraged to travel back to the club to play (if feasible) rather than lose them to other teams. Although this is done as a way of ensuring the club's survival it also maintains the coherence of the town as well.

Bordertown Rugby Club, Local Identity and Nationality

The final way in which Bordertown Rugby Club asserts its relationship with the town is through its performance of an explicitly ambiguous and mixed national identity. This links it firmly with Bordertown in the minds of outsiders, and also encourages the town to perceive it as representative of the Bordertown community. Much of this performance rests in the identities of the players themselves, some of whom were discussed above. However, it is also performed symbolically and ritually within the club itself.

Many of the players in Bordertown are in the unusual situation of being eligible to play for both Scotland and England. Given that eligibility in rugby terms is centred around descent rather than place of birth, and given that most people in Bordertown can claim at least one grandparent of either Scottish or English nationality, most players are eligible under these criteria. The result of this is the ability of the rugby club to have either an ambiguous identity, a mixture of both English or Scottish, or to be entirely Scottish. Nationally, the club is a public mixture, in keeping with the character of Bordertown itself. Both a Scottish and English club president are elected and put on the honour role. Their strips are almost entirely black and neutral, and most players are eligible to play for both Scotland and England. Thus, nationally it is mixed, and it is accepted as a given.

However, it is also generally accepted that the club is seen as Scottish because it plays in the Scottish League. Most of the players in the club agree with this identification of the club, with the mixed nationality used in public to emphasise the club's connection to the town. This Scottish identification does not always sit easily with the club's opponents however:

> I think a lot of them like to think of us as being English, so it's like a little Scotland versus England thing. But yeah, I think a few regards us as being English.
>
> (Liam)

Within the club, national identity does not usually cause any problems. National identity is raised in banter or jokes, but is rarely mentioned in an antagonistic way:

> You just get on with it. You know, if England's playing Scottish and you're watching at the club, you've always got half English and half Scottish and it's just . . . general . . .

> Banter . . . None of it's serious. It would probably be different if it were a game of football.
>
> (Kieran)

The split identity is something which is simply absorbed into the club's atmosphere and generally does not cause any acrimony. This seems to be in contrast to football, where several fights I witnessed were caused by it. International football matches, but particularly those between England and Scotland, tended to be characterised by tension in the town. This was not the case for rugby internationals:

> When we used to watch the England-Scotland games all the time in the club, there was always Scotland in one room and England in the other . . . crowded round the little tellies before we had the big screens. Um, and we used to shout through, ah, silly things, this is men and women. But there's no arguments. Not unless anybody's very drunk and being very stupid. But no, you have a bit of a mickey-take and that, but no.
>
> (Bethany)

Bethany begins here to discuss how the club itself operates. There is some 'mickey-taking' between the two groups, but by and large there is no trouble. This is because the club, like the town, handles its split, and therefore ambiguous, identity by embracing it.

National identity, despite being officially ambiguous and mixed, is not seen as being a problem. Instead, like the town, it is a way of promoting togetherness within the club. This is a dramatic contrast to the difficulties encountered by the Jesters in managing their gender identities. However, despite repeated assertions that national identity does not matter, and the continuous impression that the mixing and playing up to it is simply a public face, the constant references to it imply that something else is going on particularly among the Jesters. Due to Bordertown's position and the perception of its identity by outsiders, the players become representatives of Bordertown to the outside world and so must develop ways of dealing with this. The way that this is done, and the ways in which tensions are mediated, is through the use of national identity, despite the fact that it is not claimed to be significant to anyone in the club.

As a result of this, in terms of sport, most players are able to adopt a flexible or instrumental attitude towards national identity. If, in order to further their playing careers, it is necessary

for them to claim a different national identity to the one that they normally hold, this would not be a problem. This gives the club an ambiguous identity which is in keeping with the character of the rest of the town. This enables it to be accepted as a representative of the town.

This representative status also ties Bordertown to both the English and Scottish national communities. Through sport, Bordertown's distinctiveness and belonging are affirmed. This affirmation is crucial if the town is to be able to handle its ambiguity. As local identity is based on distinctiveness, marginalisation can only be overcome through acceptance of the distinction.

Conclusion

The national identity of Bordertown is ambiguous. It is a mixture of English and Scottish identities, with the town itself seeming to belong to neither national community. The ambiguity has the potential to cause difficulties for those people living there in terms of the ways that they themselves appear. Unlike other border communities, which do not really allow for the public mixture of identity, Bordertown deals with this by embracing the ambiguity. This is done through the promotion of a vigorous sense of local identity.

The local identity allows the community of Bordertown to reject the marginalisation and exclusion which is attempted by some members of the English and Scottish communities. The marginalisation they do experience is turned instead into a position of considerable power and control in that they are able to be independent in social terms from the others.

This local identity is represented through institutions such as sports teams. These teams are made up of players who are accepted as being members of the Bordertown community. These institutions bring the town into a national network, which links them to other communities, whilst simultaneously asserting their independence.

As has been shown, Bordertown Rugby Club has a problematic relationship both with the town it represents and with its own national identity. Despite the fact that its relationship with the town is its best way of ensuring unity and togetherness between players, thus enabling it to maintain its player base, this is also a potential source of weakness and division. Marginalised by the town, but pushed towards it by the town's own identity, the

club is in a difficult position. However, it is accepted as a representative of the town because it is prepared to embrace the ambiguity offered to it, and use it to its own advantage.

Because of this, the club and the town enjoy a symbiotic relationship - they support each other. The following chapter examines the ways in which the Jesters are able to exploit this relationship. By asserting their membership of the club and the town through the performance of their ambiguous national identity, they are able to assert their membership of each of these communities. In so doing, they reduce their own marginalisation, which takes place because of their ambiguous gender identity.

Chapter 7:
Performing national identity

The previous chapter established the national identity of Bordertown as being problematic, and discussed the community's strategy of dealing with it. This management was achieved through the establishment of a strong local identity which was based upon the acceptance of the ambiguity inherent in Bordertown's national identity. This identity was then performed to the national communities of Scotland and England, and the ambiguity inherent in it was made clear. This in turn made the ambiguity acceptable, and miminised the marginalisation of the inhabitants of Bordertown. One of the most important ways this was done was through the use of sports teams and institutions such as the rugby club.

Institutions such as these had three main functions. First, through participating in such sports, individuals were able to associate themselves with a larger group such as a national community. Thus, claims of supporting one team or another were used as identity markers for individuals who possessed a problematic national identity. Second, sports teams were used to link the community itself to the larger community using the individuals on the teams as representatives of localness, and of national ambiguity. Third, they were used to promote the continuation of the Bordertown local community by enabling people to maintain links with it, and also by giving the community a recognisable symbol of community to support.

Although this establishes sports teams as being important in overcoming national ambiguity, it thus far remains unclear why exactly this situation should help the Jesters. This is especially true as it is through their participation in sport that the Jesters create an ambiguous identity for themselves in the first place. However, this chapter argues that it is because of the three functions outlined above that the Jesters are able to use their national and local identity to disguise their gender ambiguity.

This is done through the public performance of national ambiguity. As has been seen, national ambiguity has the potential to cause great social uneasiness in the surrounding national communities. However, if this ambiguity is able to be performed in a way which renders it acceptable, as is the case in the performance of Bordertown's local identity, then it

ceases to be a problem for those possessing it. Therefore, if the Jesters are able to perform their national ambiguity convincingly, and are able to establish their identities as locals and representatives of Bordertown, they are able to perform an ambiguous identity which deflects attention of outsiders away from their gender and also reduces their marginalisation within Bordertown. They therefore attempt to use national ambiguity and a role as representatives of the community to gain community membership.

This chapter examines the ways the Jesters perform such an identity and assesses the extent to which they are successful. It begins with an examination of how ambiguous national identity is performed by the Jesters, particularly the use of song, dress and banter. These involve both the public face of the team and also the relationships between players in the team. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the Jesters were not willing to discuss issues such as gender or sexuality openly. In addition to this, open conflict was not encouraged. As a result, a mechanism for diffusing tension was needed. Because the team was familiar with using national identity as a means of interacting with others outside the team, and because it was common to interpret everyone's behaviour through an analysis of their national identity, as discussed in Chapter 5, national identity became one of the main ways that other issues were discussed among players. This resulted in national identity being used to foster unity within the team. This is not an entirely unproblematic use of this identity. As will be seen, the ways in which the Jesters' national identity is performed results in the marginalisation of some players, and different tensions being raised. Although national identity is established as an important way of uniting the team, and bringing people together, as well as linking the team to the club and Bordertown community, there are potential problems. These are seen in the marginalisation and potential alienation of several team members, who perceive the continual references to and emphasis on the differing national identities as divisive.

Having looked at some of the internal problems caused by such a performance to some team members, I assess the success of such a strategy in overcoming marginalisation. As will be seen, much of this depends on the way in which the social context of Bordertown operates, as well as other issues of women using sport and representing communities and the ways in which marginalised groups are able to use sport to gain inclusion. In the case of the Jesters, as women, their roles as representatives of a community are problematised. In the context of national representation, I argue that women are used to represent vulnerability. However, it

is as active defenders of the community that the Jesters need to be accepted, and this is the source of some of their problems. A brief discussion of such issues follows before the chapter concludes that the Jesters are accepted as part of the local community, and that they are accepted as representatives.

Performing national identity

Although I have argued throughout this work that identity should be seen and understood as a performance, nowhere in the context of Bordertown and the Jesters is this more evident than in the case of national identity. This is performed consciously and publicly by the Jesters, and is also a private performance which mediates relations between team mates. Examination of the Jesters' behaviour reveals that they are in the main successful in their assertion of local identity, and therefore in the claims to membership of the local community as representatives. They do this through the continuous performance of ambiguous national identity. National identity informs team relations, behaviours and conversations both within the team, and with outsiders. It is so pervasive a topic that one ceases to notice national comments until removed from the context. This constant repetition ensures that national identity remains at the forefront of the team's mind, but also in the eyes of those observing them. It is crucial for this to happen. Without it, the team's gender marginality would come again to the fore.

Banter between team members is often explicitly national. I have been called a 'kiwi', suffered when Australia lost to England, nearly staying away from the club - the Scots were unforgiving for 'my' having lost to the Auld Enemy, and the English were jubilant - and endured comments about 'soft Aussies' when the Australian League team threatened to pull out of their British Tour after September 11. I have also been easily identified by one of the students staying at the Halls I was a warden in. He went down to the club, beginning to ask questions about the 'Australian or New Zealand bird' who played rugby. Newer or quieter team members are commonly teased about English or Scottish strips, with relevant comments from all sides in support, "It shows she's got taste!", derision, "She is young. She will learn." and confusion, "Today you're wearing a Scottish top. Last week it was England. Which one are you?" National identity is referred to constantly, but usually only to people who are well-known, or who the team is looking to include. It is a way of gaining and signaling acceptance into the team, with rules about what can be said or not about the other's identity. Abusive language or doing down the other is not allowed, but banter, some of it

quite sharp and cutting, is. And anyone making comments about the superiority of their national identity can expect immediate reprisals.

The fact that it is national identity which is chosen is another indication that national identity is an issue, and is used as a tool to facilitate unity in the team. This is particularly important if the team is to be able to unite to counter other accusations of marginality and ambiguity, such as those stemming from their ambiguous gender identity. It is a way of linking the club with the town and the Jesters with the club.

The ambiguity in national identity, as well as being symbolically asserted in the club, is also ritualised within the Jesters through the use of songs and ritualised banter. The team traditionally sing 'Flower of Scotland' and 'Swing Low', two songs adopted by Scottish and English rugby crowds, on the bus on the way home from matches:

> Basically when you're on the bus, and you're singing 'Flower of Scotland', and you'll no sing 'Sweet Chariot', there's a few people get a bit upset. . . Look at Trish's face when you sing 'Flower of Scotland' and never sing 'Sweet Chariot'. . . . Oh she used to get right mad. Loosened up a bit now like, but still cannae take it. When I'm drunk I'll sing 'Sweet Chariot' anyway. . . . It's something to sing on anyways afterwards. . . I think it's just a case of keeping everybody together and everybody high and happy and that. Amused on the way back. It works actually, gets everybody started on a sing song, keeps everybody together. . . If you're coming home on the bus and everybody's quiet, got sore legs and sore back, say right, Player of the Day and Numpty of the Day, just gets everybody going doesn't it?
>
> (Emily)

Some of this is not unusual in rugby. The songs sung by the Jesters regarding their gender identity, and the implications these have for their management of identity were discussed in Chapter 4. Two interesting things emerge from this passage. The first is that the songs which traditionally start the singing are national in character. The team usually starts by singing "Flower of Scotland", the unofficial Scottish anthem for rugby crowds. However, this must be followed by the entire team singing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", which is the English equivalent. If this is not done "there's a few people get a bit upset." This ingrains the duality of the team's identity into the public arena. So important is this that it occasionally causes difficulties for the team. While on tour in Northern Ireland, it was

decided that it would be impolitic to sing "Swing Low" in case of offending anyone. As a result of this, the team also decided to ban "Flower of Scotland", over the grumbling of several players. The team found itself in a quandary at the rugby club hosting the tournament, however, when they were invited to sing a song 'from their home'. Not allowed to sing either one of the songs that they knew best, and unwilling to sing the other songs regarding gender identities, they demurred. This did not prevent some members of the team from joining in with a Scottish men's team for a chorus of "Flower of Scotland".

This is further embedded by the team's use of national songs in the initiation rituals:

> It wasnae me who made you pull your trousers down, but I made you sing the Australian national anthem.
>
> (Emily)

What is especially interesting in this instance is the fact that I was made to sing the Australian national anthem. Team members are usually asked to sing either the Scottish or English song which tends to take the edge off - everyone joins in, and then everyone sings the alternative song, though this can sometimes get out of hand, with a chorus of 'You can stick your fucking chariots/thistles up your arse!' to the tune of 'She'll be coming round the mountain' being sung back again. In my case, however, no-one else knew the words and I was forced to do a solo rendition of 'Advance Australia Fair' with my trousers round my ankles. This is not a good song at the best of times, but was rendered even worse by my singing. Very quickly I decided to become an honorary Scot, and other than the occasional chorus of 'Waltzing Matilda' I managed to avoid the solo singing for the rest of my time there. This incident shows the importance of national identity itself, though. This singing of national songs is not simply a reflection of an English-Scottish divide in the team. If it were, I would have been assigned one identity or another and would have sung the corresponding song. It was the fact that I was Australian which was important to the team, and which affected all of their perceptions of me.

This national identity was also performed in other ways. For example, on the tour mentioned above songs were banned. However, other details of the performance in this context were also discussed within the team. Despite the fact that rugby in Northern Ireland is a mainly Protestant and middle class pastime, and so a context in which the team were unlikely to encounter Irish nationalists or individuals for whom English identity was a problem, the team were careful to cultivate a Scottish identity. Entering an area where

national identity had corresponding political implications, and experienced in instances where problematic identities cause social difficulties, the Jesters were concerned to perform a 'neutral' identity. Players were explicitly warned not to take English rugby jerseys or football strips away with them. This was extended to Scottish jerseys as well, in the interests of 'fairness'. The various members of the police force were reminded not to take their warrant cards, identifying them as working in England in a fairly unpopular profession, with them and it was advised not to mention their occupations. Players were also gently encouraged, though never explicitly told, to cultivate the identity of a Scottish club by not mentioning the ambiguity of Bordertown's identity. If asked, the team played in Scotland, and came from the Borders, and it was left at that. Even the team bus was decorated with a Scottish flag.

This particular performance is revealing for several reasons. It shows the sensitivity of the Jesters to the nuances of national and local identity. Aware of the potential difficulties of an 'English' identity for the team, they cultivated a Scottish face. However, because of the internal team dynamics, and the fact that they were aware of the potential for divisions within the team as a result of national identity, they were also unable to 'perform' an entirely Scottish identity either. They were also not keen to take up my offer of teaching them a few Australian songs to enable them to take on an entirely separate identity. This shows that national identity is important in terms of how they are seen by others - they are aware of the fact that their national identity comes under scrutiny are able to adjust their behaviour accordingly. It also shows the importance of national identity in mediating relationships within the team.

In the event, most of these precautions were unnecessary. Nonetheless, the total dampening of any mention of national identity in the team was probably unusual to Bordertown. I suspect that because they have a developed sense of their ambiguity that this was something that they discussed and agreed to do. It is unlikely that any other team would have thought of this. However, because the performance of national identity is so much a part of the Jesters' public persona, the issue of how to deal with it was raised.

As can be seen, national identity is defined and performed as a blend of Scottish and English in the Jesters. It is used to unify the team through song, social interaction or 'banter' and through ritual. It is also used to link the team with the Bordertown community. However,

neither of these two things happens unproblematically. Evidence suggests that as well as unifying the team through banter, national identity also has the potential to split the team. In addition, as women, the Jesters have difficulty becoming accepted as 'defenders' of a community through sport, and as women who are already marginalised because of their participation in sport, this becomes doubly difficult.

Internal tensions

The strategy of playing up the ambiguity of national identity is a successful strategy in terms of maintaining national identity in the consciousness of outsiders and team members. It does, however, run the risk of marginalising some of the members of the group. In the example of gender identities, this was shown in the exclusion of lesbian players' sexual identities. In the case of national identity, it is the turn of the English players to feel excluded.

This is interesting because when twenty of the players were asked about their national identity in a survey, ten identified themselves as Scottish, seven as English and three as both English and Scottish. Thus, although Scots are in the majority on the team, they are by no means overwhelming. However, it would appear that for the English players national identity is less of an issue than for Scottish players, and that they occasionally found the importance attached and the attention paid to it frustrating. On two surveys, written by English-identifying players, there were comments reflecting frustration and some sense of alienation:

> It's nice to feel you belong to a group but when others in the group let you down you want to distance yourself e.g.: fighting and bad behaviour. It upsets me when people harm others just because they are in a different group.

> I hate when people make a fuss about England/Scotland saying "They're better than . . . " It's ridiculous. It doesn't matter what country you're from.

Although the first comment makes no reference to national identity, the entire questionnaire was discussing national identity and so should be read in this light. In many ways it could be said to reflect a more general dissatisfaction with the way that the Jesters tends to operate as a group, and a feeling that the 'One in, all in' attitude can be limiting and suffocating. However, in addition to this, there is a recognition of Bethany's attitude in Chapter 6, where

she claimed to have a problem with English people because they're 'horrible'. This particular player may well be trying to distance herself from that type of prejudice.

The second comment addresses the issue of national identity more directly, and displays a weariness about the attention paid to it. For this player, national identity is not an issue, and so should not be used as a way of identifying them or others. It is not a way of judging someone. It is significant that none of the Scottish players wrote any such comments on their surveys. This shows that none of them have a problem with the performance of identity. Although the team's identity is ambiguous, it is also Scottish. As was shown in Chapter 6, English players were more likely to support Scotland than vice versa, indicating that national identity was not something they took as seriously as the Scots. Because of this, their reactions to the performance of national identity, the continuing emphasis on division and splits in the team, and the performance of a Scottish-leaning national identity causes them some marginalisation.

Trish, the player mentioned by Emily, is English, and when asked about the singing had quite a different interpretation of it. Although most players see the singing and the nationality as being something which brings people together, Trish sees the tradition as being divisive:

> It's the Scots. And I am not knocking it because they're Scottish! But it's mainly the Scottish ones. . . Really staunch about being . . . from Scotland. . . I guess I mean [player], she gets herself into so much trouble just because she's so, Scotland this, Scotland that . . .I do find that, in our team, that there's quite a few that, I mean Bethany calls herself Scottish but she's English, well, fair enough. Support Scotland and that but why when you're English call yourself Scottish when you're not? . . . [I]t's not the fact that it's England-Scotland, it's the fact that, honest to God I don't see why we're not the same. Why we have to be different. Maybe that links back to racism and that, because I'm not prejudiced at all. But I can't think of anything, I'm really not a prejudiced person, but I think that everyone in my club is just . . . why should it make a difference just because they're English or they're Scottish?. . . I think about it every time, saying they're gay or lesbian or whatever, so what? To me personally it makes no difference. . . . I just cannot see, in honesty, why it makes such a difference . . . to me personally

> I cannot see why . . English, Scottish, it just totally doesn't matter.
>
> (Trish)

A split appears here between the English and the Scottish players, felt more keenly by the English. The public face of the team is Scottish, but mainly because the Scottish players seem to insist on it. Although it is never explicitly stated, this resentment manifests itself in other ways, such as the English players refusing to sing with Scottish songs. But often it seems to that the Scots have something to prove, that they are the ones who approach the English players to comment on English-Scottish sports results. Trish's sense that 'we aren't different, why does it make a difference' is born out of exasperation as much as anything else. In truth, these women seem to have more in common than they do different, so why is the difference within the team emphasised?

The English players, then, are concerned about their national identity for different reasons. Having the team being identified as English is not really an issue - it is generally accepted in the club that it should be considered a Scottish club because it plays mostly in the Scottish League. The problem appears to be the constant mention of it - why, if they have ceded the public face of the team, should they be reminded of it constantly? The other side of this, though, is the feeling that if the whole issue is so important to the Scottish players, it is better to simply let them get on with it. Ciara is one such player who joins in the singing, but reluctantly or "under duress do I":

> I'll sing along with it. I mean, I know what I am, and I'm English. I play for a Scottish team. So we . . . I support both really, if you want to know.
>
> (Ciara)

Ciara's identification of the Jesters as a Scottish team combines with her own relaxed attitude towards her identity. Being unproblematically English gives her the confidence to absorb many of the outer trappings of Scottishness of the team. Although the town and club might promote an ambiguous identity, the Jesters really do only accept a Scottish face. The English players are able to absorb this relatively easily, however, because their identity does not seem to be as problematic to them.

However, the constant reminder of it makes for a potential division in the team. The strange thing about this is the fact that the Scottish players seem to be aware of this, but do not see it as being important:

> I think that we, we the Scottish supporters get away with a lot with the girls because we're always singing 'Flower of Scotland', and then we never sing anything for the English, and then when they do sing it, we sing something very horrible afterwards. (*Laughter.*) But it's, but that you know, I think that they take that in good stead.
>
> (Bethany)

It is evident that it is taken, but not necessarily in good stead. In fact, this represents another thing which the Jesters never really discuss, along with sexuality. It is simply assumed not to be a problem. In general, the English players are fairly relaxed about it, and accept it as being part of the price they pay for being a part of the team. However, it is significant that these practices of inclusion also have a dimension of exclusion as well. The exclusion is downplayed, and marginalised players go along with the behaviours of the rest of the team because they seem to have no choice. Either they must accept their position in the team, or they must resign it. This would cause them to have to give up a sport they enjoy, and also move from the team's protection to an isolated position.

This indicates that despite the team's constant use of national identity to unify members, in fact, this strategy sometimes has the reverse affect. These divisions, although not publicly aired are real and indicate that the concentration on national identity, while important in terms of distracting attention from other issues surrounding gender and sexuality, may actually hurt the Jesters in the long run. It is also a strategy which relies on the Jesters overcoming a social context which does not welcome the notion of women representing a community in a community which has already marginalised them. To what extent is it successful in overcoming these problems?

Representation, gender and belonging - problems outside the team

Chapter 6 discussed the importance of sport in establishing Bordertown's connection with the national communities of Scotland and England. It was through this medium, among others, that Bordertown's ambiguous identity was established and accepted. In a similar way, the Jesters are able to use sport to promote their connection with the Bordertown community, thereby deflecting attention and criticism of their gender identity. As a result of this, although performing an ambiguous national identity is of interest to everyone involved in rugby in Bordertown and in the town itself, it has an increased importance for the Jesters. Not only is it a means of distraction, it is also way of gaining local community membership.

Because of this, as well as the internal reasons outlined above, national identity plays an important part in the team's public 'face'. The ritualised singing of national songs, for example, is unique to the Jesters, and the use of explicitly national banter between players is more frequent in the Jesters than elsewhere in the club. This shows that national identity is used differently by the Jesters. Because national identity is an important part of the club's connection with the town, as argued in Chapter 6, the Jesters must perform it more intensely in order to link themselves firmly with the club itself, as well as the town. In conversation with Michael about national identity in the Jesters, he felt that it was performed more consciously and with more significance than in other teams at the club:

> It sounds more intense really I think. . . I think men are, well, just more laid back really, in a way. You'll probably get similar answers from the others about, life in general. More, I don't know, pretty chilled out. One day the next sort of thing.

Three main issues are raised by this observation. First is the perceived difference in attitude and behaviour between men and women. If this difference is not due to biological differences between the two, it must be attributed to the different social contexts the two groups find themselves in. If we accept this, the second issue is how national identity is used within the Jesters - as a way of overcoming tensions and opening up debates without offending or alienating others. And finally, the ways in which the Jesters publicly perform their national identity must be analysed as being the main ways they seek to gain inclusion. It is because of this aim, ultimately, that the Jesters experience and perform national identity

more 'intensely' than other teams at the club. After all, they have the most to gain and the most to lose by it.

The previous chapter concentrated on the ways in which Bordertown's ambiguous national identity contributed to the development of a specifically local identity. Throughout the discussion, it became clear that institutions which are accepted by locals as being representative of the community rely to a greater or lesser extent on how much the community actually relates to the institution. A comparison was drawn between the football team, the Bordertown Bombers, and the Bordertown Rugby Club, in which the rugby club was seen to be more accepted as a part of the community because its members were also perceived to be 'locals'. This was a sense of 'localness' which involved the stretching of the town's social borders to include others. In comparison, the football team was not considered a true representative of the community not because its players did not live in the area (a characteristic shared by the rugby club) but rather because they were not originally from the local area. As a result, the town felt no true connection to the team, and rejected it.

As a result, it is possible to claim that the social context of the players, and their perceived connection to the community impacts directly on the community's acceptance of them as individuals and the support of the team as a whole. This being the case, the Jesters have a very real concern in attempting to gain acceptance from the community and the club because of their already marginalised position. Their acceptance on local grounds makes it more difficult for exclusion on the grounds of gender. As a result of this, it is crucial for them to perform the local identity well. And this identity, as we have seen, depends on the successful performance of national ambiguity.

The difficulty surrounding this is that because of their ambiguous gender identity, the Jesters are not fully accepted as being members of the Bordertown community. As a result, they face difficulties in becoming fully accepted as being representative of it. This is related to two different things. First is the fact that, because of their behaviour, they cannot be accepted as part of the community in terms of their behaving like 'proper' Bordertown women. Second is the problematic relationship that women's sports and representing communities have always had. Obviously the two points are related.

Michael's comments regarding the intensity of national feeling in the Jesters were followed up by a discussion about the different ways men and women were prepared to use and experience national identity. I commented to him that I had observed that male players were likely to be more instrumental in their uses of national identity, being prepared to assert one or the other if it enabled them some social gain. This was particularly evident in discussions regarding people's willingness to play for either Scotland or England should the chance arrive. He responded:

> Is a lot of that not down to the fact that . . . there's . . . more prestige playing for, obviously it's a well established game for men than it is for women. I don't know, I'm not saying it's easier to get in the team but, you get representative honours. There's certainly less players, but I'm not saying that would make it easier. . . . Whatever sport you play, you have to be an outstanding player to play for your country whether its women's rugby or men's . . . er . . . lacrosse or whatever. You know? It's not, I don't, it doesn't matter what sport it is. But no, I think men are probably more don't know just more . . . desperate to play for their country . . . I would compare a women's rugby team, from my limited experience of them, to a men's second or third team in terms of their general attitude.

Several important issues are raised here. The first is the difference in level between the men's and women's game. The men's game is perceived to be more developed, meaning that the women's skill levels can only really be compared (in Bordertown at least) to a second or third team level. This is because these two groups have little or no chance of playing at that level and being accepted as representatives of their national community. Their skills are simply not up to it. Because of the unlikelihood of their being forced to choose, it is relatively easy for the Jesters, and men who play rugby at a similar level, to have unproblematic, inflexible and intense feelings and expressions of national identity.

Second, Michael assumes that men and women experience national identity differently. That is, for most women what counts is their ability to play for the nation they feel they belong to. He argues that men, in contrast, wish to play at the highest level they can. As a result, their attitude towards their national identity can be more pragmatic because it is not who they represent that is the problem. Rather it is their ability to represent which is important.

Third, there is the unspoken assumption that it is men who are the natural representatives of the nation, men's sports which are the more important, and the women are somehow devalued because fewer women play sports such as rugby, and the national representatives of men's sports are more feted than the women. These three factors result in men and women having different outlooks towards their national identities in Bordertown.

These are all related to the question of whether women can be considered representative of a community or if only men can be? Most of the evidence tends towards the assumption that, within sporting contexts particularly though others as well, men create and embody the nation and are therefore its rightful representatives.

The relationship between women and national communities is somewhat problematic when we consider what role women have had in representing such communities. We could consider representation to be part of a shared system of symbols and interpretation within a community (Hall, 1997: 1), taking place through the use of a common language:

> Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language.
>
> (Hall ,1997: 17)

The language used is that of symbolism - signs and images of the community being interpreted. This interpretation is highly individual and personal, but the symbols can and are shared, though their meanings may differ from individual to individual. One of the most important symbols of the nation and the national community is that of a woman. Walby argues that among women's roles in the national community is that of a mother - the biological reproducer of the nation (Walby, 1996: 236 - 237). This mother figure may also become the symbolic figure of the nation:

> The nation as a loved woman in danger or as a mother who has lost her sons in battle is a frequent part of the particular nationalist discourse in national liberation struggles or other forms of national conflicts when men are called to fight 'for the sake of our women and children' or to 'defend their honour'.
>
> (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1994: 315)

We might therefore argue that women embody the nation, literally and figuratively, and they are, therefore, one of the primary representations, and representatives of it (for a fuller

discussion see McCrone, 1998: 120 - 124). However, on another level, women have been denied the opportunity to represent the nation in public. Although the mother figure, the symbolism inherent in both the rape of the homeland and the rape of female civilians is obvious, often such symbols and acts are aimed at the community members. When it comes to representing the nation on an international stage, men are considered more appropriate.

Part of this is related to the importance of war and competition in the development of national community. Anderson argues that in worshipping the dead, or those who have fallen for the nation, the nation is worshipping itself, reaffirming its identity. He argues that the growth of nationalism and the nation-state coincides with the decline of religious modes of thought, along with their promise of salvation and meaning of death. A new way of thinking about death and the reason for human suffering was needed, and he suggests that nations in part, filled this need:

> No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely *because* they are empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times . . . Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings. . . With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. . . What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning. . . nations . . . always loom out of an immemorial past, and glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny.
>
> (Anderson, 1991: 9 - 12)

The national community is therefore built upon the bones and bodies of those people who have died in defence of the nation. It is not these people, literally, as individuals, but rather the ideal which they have come to represent. Whether they believed in the nation or not, they have become the nation - the national community inhabits their bodies and appropriates their deaths in the same way that athletes can be said to be more than simply individuals - they are the nation in the same way as the soldiers are.

I am reluctant to equate sport with war, although they share certain similarities. The notion that athletes are soldiers, sacrificing their bodies for their communities is no doubt attractive,

but does not really go very far to explain exactly what is going on. Rather, I argue that the bodies of athletes and the bodies of soldiers may come to perform similar functions in terms of representing the nation for people. It is not what the bodies actually do, but the reasons given for their actions which are important, and that the worship of war and the worship of sport both take similar forms to more religious forms of worship. Perhaps what is most significant about the link between athletes and war is that the worship of sport and the nation through sport prepares the public for the worship of the nation at war, thus deifying both athletes and soldiers simultaneously. Sport also gives people a way of making sense of way in that it is a context which is competitive and conflictual, with clear divisions between 'them' and 'us'.

As has been seen, sport is a gendered context, and in the context of Britain (as with most of the world) a particularly masculine context. Billig makes the link between sport, gender and war explicit:

> It is men who largely read the daily flag-waving accounts of the sports pages . . . citizenship still is often gendered in the details of its entitlements and duties . . . Above all, it is men who are expected to answer the state's ultimate call to arms; they are the ones who will pursue the conduct of war, shooting and being shot, raping, but not being raped, in the cause of the homeland . . . The political crisis which leads to the war can be quickly created, but the willingness to sacrifice cannot be. There must be prior rehearsals and reminders so that, when the fateful occasion arises, men, and women, know how they are expected to behave. Daily there is a banal preparation.
>
> (1997: 124)

This preparation comes in the reading of sports pages, the descriptions of sporting contests, particularly those of national teams. The language used here, the notion of sacrifice for the country, and the embodied experiences of athletes, which links into the notion of bodily sacrifices for the nation, results in a close link between sport and war, with representation of community and the embodied experience of both sport and war.

The result of this link is to make the ultimate representative of a nation male, in either a sporting or a military context. The closeness of sport and war in the minds of a population, and the fact that women are still largely excluded from combat positions in the military,

means that female athletes cannot achieve the same representative status as their male counterparts, regardless of the extent of their success.

Obviously this is starting to change somewhat. The relative absence of full-scale war, requiring the mobilisation of the entire population, in the West has resulted in the balance being shifted. Female athletes, particularly if they are successful or show the 'right' type of national spirit, and especially in the absence of successful male athletes, are being given their chance to shine. But the continuing link between sport and war means that this representative role is still not fully accepted. The mothering, caring, nurturing, and passive, image of women in the national community, has yet to be reconciled fully with the competitive, aggressive, active female athlete.

Though this is true for the nation as a whole, can it be said to be the same for women athletes in smaller communities? To a certain extent, the same principles apply. Hill's examination of wrestling (1999) implies that the analogy between sport and war, and the need for men to act to defend the community still holds true. This is also true in Bordertown, and can be seen in an examination of the coverage given to men's and women's sports. Men's sports dominate, and are frequently and explicitly linked to the community. The coverage of women's sport does not do this.

I am arguing that in the national community, the support of sports teams and their coverage in the national newspapers brings the community together. It does this, not only by giving people something in common to discuss, but also by doing this in such a way that the people are prepared to continue to support the community in other contexts, such as open conflict or war. As a result, sport gives a common ground for gossip or discussion which in turn binds the community together. The athletes themselves are both figures of speculation as individuals but, more importantly, empty vessels or symbols to be interpreted as the community needs. If this is accepted, it seems likely that sport and the representation of local communities works in a similar way. Unlike Cronin, who argues that local and national sports operate in different ways, I believe they are very similar.

Cronin's argument is based on the notion that intra-national sport, or local sport, is divisive, and that international sport is based on the unifying power of the nation:

> A victory against another nation produces a sense of elation, national pride and unites the individual behind the team and the accompanying symbolism of the national strip, the flag and the anthem. Solely domestic competition . . . does not allow for this as all emotional attachments are invested in communal opposition or support, for or against the town or region rather than the unifying ideal of the nation. . . It is through successful comparison with the 'other' that a celebratory notion of 'ourselves' emerges. Although a culture of nation may have a sport which exists in splendid isolation which is central to a definition of 'us', identity and notions of it, have always, either militarily or through sport, measured 'us' versus 'them'.
>
> (1999: 127)

This neglects the aspects of community life in places such as Bordertown, where the community itself feels isolated from the rest of the national community. As a result, the dynamics of the 'us' versus 'them' relationship is still in place, and so sport can be seen to operate in similar ways. The community unites behind a sports team, which then goes out and represents the community in the larger social context of the nation (or international community). If this is the case, then the issues, discussed above about who represents the community, become very important.

Where does this leave the Jesters? Their marginalised position, within the rugby club and within the town itself because of the combination of their gender identity and their choice of leisure activities, means that they are not fully accepted as being members of the community in terms of sporting representation. However, in order to gain the benefits of recognition and the financial support which follows from such recognition, it is important for them to bridge the gap which exists. It is also important for them socially, as exclusion from the community in which they live, work and socialise, is uncomfortable.

The way in which they bridge this gap is through the mobilisation of their national identity, particularly in the emphasis on the ambiguous or split nature of the identity in the team. In doing this, they are able to tap into the ambiguous identity of both the club and the town. In a sense they are playing on the ambiguities of local identity in Bordertown itself, and the flexibility of who is able to belong or not. Because most of the players are from the local area, they are considered to be 'local' as a group, even if not as individuals. By playing on this fact, and on the fact that they share the community's isolation (self-imposed or

otherwise) from the surrounding national communities, they make themselves more similar to their community than different, asserting their membership in the face of some resistance and condemnation of their performance of gender roles.

This local identity was displayed through sport particularly in the Jesters' relationship with Hinterville, one of Bordertown's neighbours. Located on the other side of the border, Hinterville represented the local rivals of Bordertown, and matches between the two places took on the significance of a local derby. Internalising the local enmities of the Bordertown community and playing them out through sport is an important part of community representation, and in this instance the Jesters were accepted as belonging to Bordertown and representing the community. The extent to which this was true of people from Hinterville was displayed in the reluctance of players from Hinterville to play for Bordertown when their team folded. It was not the players themselves from the Jesters which were the problem. Rather, it was the very fact that the Jesters played for Bordertown.

Gender and national identity

One possible reason for the lack of open hostility about national identity in the Jesters is because of their awareness of how they are perceived by the rest of the club and the town. This relates to Michael's second point regarding how men and women feel about national identity and how it is experienced differently by each gender. There are striking differences in the intensity with which players feel and use national identity in Bordertown Rugby Club. The main difference appears to be that between men and women, where the women seem to feel more strongly, and are far more vocal about national identity than are the men. The reason implied by Michael is that men are, in general, just more 'chilled out', or relaxed about such things.

This is a point which is raised by several of the Jesters, and they are aware that they are seen as being somehow more emotional than the male players in the club. This is manifest in how the players relate to each other, and is then extended to debates and performances of national identity. The intensity of national identity operates to overlay other difficulties and also, again, to distract attention from other aspects of the Jesters' daily interaction which are open to misinterpretation because of their gender.

One example of this is regarding the use of gossip and communication in the team. Although all teams in the club use gossip and rumour as ways of controlling the behaviour of others, in the Jesters it is interpreted in a specifically gendered way by both the players themselves and outsiders:

> It's usually nothing to do with rugby. It's just to do with a whole load of women being in the same place at the same time. Usual women things. It all blows out of proportion, I'm a friend of that one so I won't speak to that one. It just goes on like that. But that's in any sport, any team game.
>
> (Emily)

> Sometimes I don't enjoy it but that's just . . . I can't . . . because I'm close to Bethany . . I don't . . . I just get fed up with it. There's quite a bit of backstabbing goes on in . . . I think it happens in every team.
>
> (Wendy)

> There's a little bit of two-facedness. A lot . . . boys, boys are a lot different to girls. But then, the boys say 'Oh, blah, blah, blah' and I've heard them . . . slag their team mates off so I think, 'Well maybe's you're not, you know, you are just as bad, probably'. . . .
>
> (Bethany)

As can be seen, the fact is that the Jesters do not necessarily always get along. In fact, during the time I was there, it was more common for players not to get along with each other than to enjoy each other's company. This is despite the unity described earlier. As a result of the need for a united public face, the Jesters turn to practices such as bitching, gossiping and 'backstabbing' in order to express their feelings about team mates. Part of this is also about how players are able to consolidate their own positions of power in the team (Noon and Delbridge, 1993: 29). By forming allegiances among themselves they protect themselves and are also able to gain and maintain influence within the group.

As can be seen from the above comments, players accept this as being normal among groups of women. It is assumed that the way women interact is less likely to be through direct confrontation, and rather to use indirect methods such as gossip. However, studies of practices such as gossip have revealed no significant differences between the genders in these behaviours (Leaper and Holliday, 1995: 237), a fact which Bethany notes. Bethany comments that this is a problem for captains, as it is almost impossible for players to be told

what to do or criticised as players without it being taken personally. In this sense, she feels that the male players are easier to deal with. Therefore, men gossip about their team-mates, but it is somehow not seen as being as bad. The potential for damaging splits in the team because of gossip is less for men. This is demonstrated when examining how the teams tend to socialise away from the rugby club. Particularly with the younger men, it is common to see them out in large groups of seven or eight. These tend to be age cohorts rather than team based, and may include players from several different teams in the club. However, where one player is seen, others are likely to be close by. In contrast to this, it is less common for the women's rugby team to go out as a group unless it is specifically organised. Even where players are relatively close in age, they are still more likely to go out with people they know outside rugby, or who they knew prior to rugby.

As a result, we cannot say that there are any essential differences in the ways that men and women interact at rugby. Both groups use gossip to affirm their place in the group. But rarely in the men's team does it seem to develop to the point where tensions are raised. However, in the women's team, the danger exists that gossip may well cause splintering. It is unclear why this is the case. Because the behaviour is the same in both groups, the difference in its significance and consequences must be more to do with the context in which the groups find themselves. The men have difficulties with personality clashes, as is normal in any group. The women have these, but they are compounded by the fact that everyone in the group is marginalised, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. As a result, everyone is more conscious of the need to remain united. As a result of this, there may be more intensity in their dealings with each other, and gossip takes on a different meaning.

The end result of this context is the need for the Jesters to develop means by which antagonisms and divisions were able to be expressed openly, but in ways which were not able to be taken personally. The way this is done is through the use of national identity. This accounts in part for the greater intensity in the women's team in matters regarding national identity.

Conclusion

As described earlier, banter between players and throughout Bordertown often has an explicitly national character. One of the ways in which people are able to demonstrate acceptance and belonging to the group is through the use of nationalist references. The singing, which is recognised as being an important mechanism for bringing people together, is always started by the singing of national songs, and players are also initiated by being forced to sing national songs. However, this banter can sometimes be a double-edged sword. As well as being used to include people, or to demonstrate acceptance, it can also be used to express rejection of an individual, or to show disapproval.

Much of this type of interaction took place under the guise of comments regarding where someone was from in the local area. Because most players are not from Bordertown itself, but rather from the area around the town, they are drawn from both sides of the border. Thus, comments regarding Hinterville can be interpreted as comments regarding England but in such a way that other English players on the team are not antagonised because it also taps into the deep-seated local rivalry between Bordertown and other towns close by.

This use of national identity was not as common as its use to bring players together. The Jesters possess an ambiguous gender identity. Because of this, and because of their own uneasiness regarding gender and sexual identity, players were unlikely ever to discuss issues of sexual orientation or problems that one player might have with another's sexual preferences. However, these difficulties were discussed privately between players of different view points, resulting in a great deal of uneasiness, tension and gossip within the team. However, it was necessary to develop an identity which everyone could relate to, and to provide another sense of common ground between players who were otherwise explicitly antagonistic towards each other. National identity provided this mechanism.

Although, as Trish noted, national identity was one other way that the team was divided, and which alienated some players, it was also a way in which people could be assigned identity and belonging to a group even if they were isolated in other ways. All of the players on the Jesters (myself excepted) could be assigned either Scottish or English national identity. So, despite other difficulties regarding sexuality which players may have had with others, they were forced to acknowledge their co-nationals. In addition to this, playing for

Bordertown meant that they were part of the conscious depiction of ambiguous nationality - something which they all shared. Discussions of supporting national sports teams, their relative performances, national banter, gave players a common ground. This was crucially important in allowing the tensions which were ever-present to be articulated but also laughed off and diffused. Things can be said under the cover of national identity which cannot be said otherwise.

The final reason that national identity is so important to the team is also because of their marginal position. However, it is not because of its ability to unite the team. Rather, it is used to bridge the gap between the team and the rest of the Bordertown community. This raises questions of whether women are likely to be accepted as legitimate representatives of the community, and if the Jesters are ever going to be able to overcome the prejudice surrounding their gender identity.

As we have seen, participation in sport is one way for marginalised people to gain or assert community membership. The Jesters are somewhat different in that, in their case, participation in sport jeopardised their membership. This chapter examines some of the problems encountered by the Jesters in their ability to become accepted as representatives of the community. In doing this, the question of how national communities tend to represent themselves and replicate themselves through sport were discussed, as was the question of who belongs and is therefore able to be the community on the sports field. I argued that national communities and local communities use sport in similar ways, to develop their identities and unite their members. I also argued that the Jesters used their national identity to assert membership of their community thereby regaining the membership of Bordertown. This strategy is successful, as seen in their relationship with players from Hinterville. They are associated with and accepted by other teams as representing Bordertown. They are accepted as part of the club, despite their ambiguous gender identity.

The following chapter draws the threads from all of the chapters together, arguing that the social context which the Jesters found themselves in was crucial in determining what identities they emphasised and how they handled the ambiguity. As has been seen, although their gender identities were more problematic than for the men, their national identities were less so, and actually provided the means both of distancing them from the criticisms of outsiders (by distracting attention from their problematic gender) and by

emphasising their similarity to, and therefore their membership and representative status of, Bordertown's community.

Chapter 8:
Conclusion: a new approach to identity?

This study began by explaining that the Jesters were going to be used to explore how people handle identities in ambiguous contexts. Ambiguity in identity, rather than identity itself, was the focus of the research. This focus on ambiguity was a different approach to the study of identity, and as such, resulted in some different findings and a different understanding of identity itself. This chapter discusses these results, and indicates the ways in which this research could be fruitfully extended.

Although briefly revisiting the results of the research, this chapter takes the form of an extension of them. Rather than simply summarising the research findings, I wish to discuss more fully the implications of them for how identity is understood and explore some of the more interesting ways it could be studied in the future. In particular, I am interested in whether a different understanding of identity will result in different research methods being used, and if sport can be considered a useful tool for such analyses. This chapter also considers whether identity management strategies in other marginalised groups may be identified in such ways, and whether it may be worth considering how other social groups manage their identities - do similar strategies exist for them, and if so, how may they be observed?

Identity as 'being' versus identity as 'doing'

It has become clear that by focusing on ambiguity in identity, a clearer understanding of how identities themselves are developed is possible. However, for this to occur, a shift is required in our understanding of identity. Rather than being analysed as a way of 'being' in society, identity is understood as a way of 'doing'. This reflects a move away from identity being a passive aspect of social life, something which is merely a reflection or description of where an individual is located in society, to an understanding of identity as something which is deliberately performed in response to specific social contexts. Identity is 'done' by people, and is therefore formed and performed in social contexts, in response to specific social conditions. Identity is performative and relational, and is therefore dynamic, and the means by which an individual or group changes or controls the ways they are perceived by society.

In current social studies, 'identity' has become something of a catchword for discussing the ways in which we, as individuals and groups, interact with the society in which we live. As such, it is understood as a way of discussing the myriad social interactions and dynamics of our daily lives (Bauman, 1997; Cohen, 1998; Jenkins, 1999; Mercer, 1990). This understanding is, however, overwhelmingly passive and locates identity within the individual. Thus, identity is established as 'being', and the way people describe how they fit into society. Identity is depicted as simply a characteristic of individuals or groups, a way of defining who they are (Billig, 1997: 60; Weeks, 1990: 88). This understanding allows identities to fluctuate because of shifts in social conditions outwith the control of groups and societies: "We are caught between the decline of old political identifications and the new identities that are in the process of becoming or yet to be born" (Rutherford, 1990: 23). Identity is a passive description, a "shorthand" way of discussing social relationships.

Although this is a neat way of defining identity, it does not advance us very far when it comes to explaining social behaviour and interactions. By locating identity within the individual and entirely dependent on external conditions, the agency and creativity of social actors is denied. This approach does not, therefore, accurately depict or analyse social conditions. Because of this, a new understanding of identity was needed.

This study has therefore understood identity as something which is 'done', deliberately and consciously, by people in response to particular social contexts and relationships. This is a more dynamic understanding of identity. Moving away from the idea that identity describes where people belong in society, it becomes the way people determine where they are. It is, therefore, a tool rather than simply a definition or characteristic. Identity as something which is 'done' or performed by people results in an understanding of identity as being whatever an individual performs or represents in a particular setting. It is a way of affecting social relationships and contexts, as well as being the product of them.

The successful management of any identity, therefore, lies in the presentation of a coherent performance which combines the various roles of a social actor, blending them into a believable, credible whole. This establishes identity as a performance which is based around interactions between various groups in society. It is relational, established through social relationships. Though this argument is, in itself, not new, this application of it represents an extension of the original. Goffman's analogy of performance when discussing social

interaction, assumes that identity itself is not shown in its completeness in any social interaction. Rather, though the performance is established as being conscious, the 'identity' of the individual acting is not assumed to be present. Rather they present a front, wear a mask (Goffman, 1990: 30), in order to interact with others. The interaction is presented as being the way for each social actor to establish appropriate behaviour:

> When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. . . Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him. . . For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or 'sign-vehicles') become available for conveying this information. If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. . . the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally *expresses* himself, and the others will in turn have to be *impressed* in some way by him.
>
> (Goffman, 1990: 13 - 14)

This establishes social interaction as being an exchange of information which then defines the appropriate behaviour for each social actor. However, my analysis moves from this interaction being seen as simply a way of controlling social relations, to being a good analogy of how identities work in society. Identities are formed and performed through interactions but actually determine the interactions themselves, and rely on the relationships established between social actors for their performance. They are the performance.

Thus, identity can be understood as being what the observer feels that the performance represents about the individual or group performing. This understanding of identity establishes the importance of context - the audience picks up cues from the performers' behaviour and the context itself, and the performance is tailored to suit the surroundings and audience expectations (Goffman, 1990: 13 - 14). Thus, the identity of an individual or group is established, and re-established, as part of an on-going dialogue. It is, therefore, not

fixed, essential or isolated(Hall, 1997: 4; Rutherford, 1990: 24). It is always relational, and always affected by the observer's gaze.

This whole performance must be appropriate to the social setting in which the social actors are located. As a result, various strategies of identity management are necessary in order for individuals to mask inappropriate or problematic parts of who they are in order to be socially credible to the rest of their society. Identity is seen as a dynamic, conscious performance which is calculated to gain the maximum social credit or acceptability, and to maintain an individual's or group's place in society. This is also dependent upon a keen awareness of the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as much as it does ambiguity. A crucial dynamic of identity is the ability of a social group to include or exclude individuals or groups according to a set of criteria. These are displayed through the interaction taking place between the observer and observed. Does one social group accept the performance of another?

This means that identity can be fruitfully studied in ambiguous contexts because it is in such contexts that actors face the task of performing a coherent, credible entire identity using two or more potentially contradicting ones. This requires the possession and skilled use of a series of identity management strategies. Which of these are available and effective depends upon the social context and the audience of the performance, and the causes of the ambiguity in the first place. Identity ambiguity can either be caused by the performance of an identity itself, or be imposed by externally imposed circumstances. Each situation has different implications for the performance of identity, and the ability of actors to manage their identities successfully.

In this study, sport was used as the medium for gaining access to the ways identities are managed. Best understood as a spectacle - a performance requiring an audience (Wertz, 1985: 13) - it provides an ideal context to look at how communities and identities are formed, performed and represented. The interaction between the athletes, the symbolism of the team itself and the audience interpretation of those symbols mirror the process of social interaction and the development of meaning described above. In the case of sport, however, as a deliberate and consciously created performance, these processes of identity formation and interpretation are made clear. This use of sport is a move away from many analyses of sport. It is used as a way of examining identity, and a context which created interesting

social interactions and problems for social actors to solve, rather than an end in itself. Sport has been the medium which has caused the exclusion or marginalisation of some individuals and groups, such as the Jesters, but also been the means of their inclusion in larger communities. It is therefore both a cause of social exclusion and marginalisation and a way of overcoming it. Which role sport plays is dependent upon the social context it occurs in.

Performance as catalyst

In some situations, ambiguous identities are caused by the performance of the actors themselves. Through their actions, individual and groups force the reinterpretation of who they are, representing themselves as something other than what the social gaze expects them to be. The performance of such identities upsets the ways in which social interactions occur - people are no longer sure what role they are to play. The reinterpretation of one role results in the rest of the roles being made redundant or altered. Social anxiety follows, with attempts being made to control the performance of those deviating from the script. These attempts may take the form of encouraging the modification of the offending performance, or through social exclusion. As shown throughout this research, the Jesters experienced both of these attacks upon their performance of an ambiguous gender identity.

Gender identity was understood throughout to operate on a binary and exclusive model, which places masculinity and femininity at opposite ends of the behavioural spectrum. This model is established and maintained through the continual surveillance of the appearance of individuals and subsequent interpretations of their behaviour. This behaviour must be clearly gender appropriate, and 'inappropriate' gender behaviour is quickly recognisable and causes anxiety. It should not be possible for masculine behaviour and appearance to be confused with feminine.

A binary and oppositional relationship between two identities does not allow for much middle ground or negotiation in terms of ambiguous gender identities should they occur. Appropriate social interactions are based around social expectations of the masculine and feminine roles, and the gendered appearance of those participating. However, it is possible for men and women to develop their bodies, alter their appearances or behave in ways which makes their gender impossible to establish through cursory examination. They upset the binary model by attempting to blur the line between masculine and feminine, and in so

doing, challenge particular social relations. The gender roles are no longer defined, and no-one is sure of how to react.

The identity management strategies available in such a situation are limited. If the performers of such an identity, in this instance women who want to play rugby, wish to continue to perform that identity, they must attempt to do so in a way which also does not further marginalise them. This is not simple. In the case of the Jesters, we saw that they are integrated into the masculine sub-culture of rugby, accepted as being part of the Bordertown Rugby Club and as rugby players themselves. This inclusion is signified in their use of club facilities and their use of space within the club. It is also seen in their behaviour off the pitch, where they adopt many of the behaviours of male rugby teams in their boisterous takeover of public space. It is this 'masculine' performance which causes the ambiguity in their identity.

As women, the Jesters are expected to be 'feminine', and are alien to the identity of a 'proper' rugby player. Particularly problematic to outside observers are the possible ill-effects playing rugby may have on other parts of the feminine performance, particularly those concerned with appearance, sexual attractiveness to men and their corresponding social standing. In addition, the loud public face of the 'rugby player identity' is at odds with the more demure feminine identity required of women.

The contrast between the two sets of behaviours is highlighted by the management strategies of the Jesters, rather than diminished. Defiantly performing their masculine identity through public behaviour, song and attitude, particularly that which rejects the dominance of male heterosexuality, they simultaneously perform a more submissive femininity. Their dress is more demure, the public face of the team is heterosexual and verbally, they celebrate the rape of a woman. This has the effect of highlighting the ambiguity, allowing the separation between masculine and feminine to remain intact. This results in their strategies of identity management being unsuccessful, and enables their continued marginalisation.

This marginalisation is reflected in their apparently powerless position, in their objectification by men in the club, and in the wider society. As 'masculine' women, the Jesters are assumed to be lesbian. This is expressed, not as an anxiety by the men involved,

but as a male heterosexual fantasy - lesbianism is objectified. Sexual relations between men and women who play rugby are also diminished, and with the women involved losing all rights to respect. The female player is perceived to be no better than a casual affair, to be discarded when finished with. This sexualisation of the women is a clear signal that they have not been fully integrated with rugby, and indeed that definite steps are being made to prevent this from occurring. It also implies that, in this context at least, gender ambiguity is not something which can be easily overcome. If the women choose to stop playing rugby, or stop performing in masculine ways, they are not marginalised. However, the continuous performance of both identities is confusing and irreconcilable.

The Jesters are able to protect themselves from social isolation to a certain extent by developing a strong team identity, a strategy which provides support and shelter for individuals whilst at the same time giving them the confidence to display the identity of rugby players. As a group they are also able to inhabit public space assertively, rejecting the gender norms of Bordertown and rugby sub-culture. The contradictory aims of the strategies displayed, however, resulted in an overall performance which was not coherent or unified. The audience remained unconvinced. The ambiguity remained in the centre of view, and the Jesters were not willing to embrace this very ambiguity. Had they been prepared to perform a version of 'masculine femininity' or to redefine their gender roles, it is possible that they might have been successful.

Within the context of Bordertown, however, it is unlikely that this could happen. Other studies of ambiguous gender identities tend to be based in larger communities(DeMello, 2000; Mansfield and Maguire, 1999; Tate, 1999). This means that other sources of social support are available to the people involved, meaning that social isolation is not as much of a problem, and that gender roles are not as clearly defined. Within Bordertown, however, a strict division between masculine and feminine behaviour still exists, and the costs of social exclusion are potentially very high. This is especially true if one takes into account the strength of the local identity in Bordertown.

When the ambiguity in an identity is caused by those, involved, therefore, it appears that identity management strategies are limited, both in availability and success. In the example of Bordertown and the Jesters, the ambiguity was not overcome because the Jesters proved to be incapable of representing a unified performance to the rest of the Bordertown society.

It is significant, however, that their behaviour in protecting the majority of team mates in enforcing the team identity, was successful. This occurred as a response to marginalisation, not as the cause of it, and is an indication that it might be possible to handle ambiguity and marginalisation if it is imposed from outside.

Performance as response

Ambiguous identities which are imposed on groups by external circumstances, such as national identity, have proven to be easier to manage. This is because the performance of such identities is as a response to marginalisation, not the cause of it. Thus, the identity management strategies were able to embrace and perform the identity as a direct response to the marginalisation. For this reason they were more successful.

Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that where the performance is a catalyst for ambiguity, it also disrupts existing norms of social interaction. In essence, it causes uneasiness by eliminating established roles for the audience, leaving everyone unsure of how to behave. Where the performance is a response to ambiguity, the ambiguity is already factored into the social interaction. People's roles are defined, and behaviour is known and controlled. Because of this, more flexibility is allowed in the identity management of these ambiguous identities. Thus, the strategies used tend to increase social inclusion, rather than promote exclusion.

The identity performed in this study, other than the briefly mentioned Jesters' defence mechanism, is that of national identity. This was established as being more flexible in terms of how individuals are able to perform it, and who is able to be included in the community. Where in the case of gender identity, inclusion or acceptance was rooted in the behaviour of an individual and group, 'place' identity can be seen as being a context outwith the control of an individual, and is therefore open to more negotiation.

This is partly due to the fact that the establishment and expression of national identity rely upon the development of a unifying system of meaning which covers disparate local communities. Individual differences and a range of interpretations of what it means to be a member of the national or 'place-based' community are therefore accepted. Bordertown provides a good example of this, as the specifically local identity and experiences of its inhabitants mediate their national identity (Cohen, 1993: 44). In addition to this, sport can

be used to integrate a national community, allowing potentially marginalised people to become accepted as part of the larger community. Sport is one context which is used to do this - both bringing communities together into a national framework, but also enabling them to assert their difference.

In the case of Bordertown, its national ambiguity poses potential problems for its community members. Specifically, the town is not accepted as belonging to either the English or Scottish national communities. This results in the potential exclusion of the people in Bordertown. It has been seen, however, that this does not tend to happen. The ambiguity of Bordertown is accepted by the surrounding national communities and is therefore accounted for in the interactions between Bordertown community members and outsiders.

It is therefore possible for 'Bordertowners' to handle the ambiguity by embracing and performing it. This is done through their local identity, which has the ambiguity, and so the town's marginalised position, at its heart. The ambiguity, far from being suppressed or hidden, is expressed through the constant mention of the mixed national character of the town, through the banter between players and throughout Bordertown which has an explicitly national character.

This was shown in the rugby club by the cultivation of specifically ambiguous symbols. Two club presidents were elected, one English and one Scottish, the club plays in both the English and Scottish leagues, the uniforms are black and neutral, and, in the Jesters at least, the national songs from both England and Scotland are sung by both nationalities in the team in the interests of fairness. The split nature of the national identity of the club is constantly reinforced.

It avoids being confrontational because it is a performance of a local identity which is expected by outsiders to be ambiguous. The townsfolk do not have to choose one identity or another, but instead are encouraged to be a mixture, to not belong. The fact that this is a performance is supported by the fact that everyone in Bordertown can identify which national identity they belong to. Performing ambiguity, however, is their way of behaving as they are expected.

However, the potential for marginalisation and total exclusion is diminished through the links Bordertown maintains with other communities and the more public performance of its local identity through sport. Bordertown Rugby Club is one such institution and the Jesters are one such team, who regularly perform their ambiguous national identity as a group.

Another example of the performance of such an identity is seen in the intensity of the Jesters' ambiguous identity. As stated above, sports teams are one way that the Bordertown community is able to reduce social marginalisation as they perform Bordertown's local identity. In order for this to be successful, the members of the sports teams must be accepted as legitimate representatives of the community - they must be community members. Community members share the ambiguous identity of Bordertown.

The Jesters identified this as being a way of overcoming the social isolation caused by their gender ambiguity. Their ambiguous status as community members was overcome through their performance as members of Bordertown. As sporting representatives of the Bordertown local community, they are accepted as community members. In addition, when dealing with people from outside Bordertown, their national ambiguity gives observers something else to think about - gender ambiguity is not diminished, but rather hidden, and their socially ambiguous identity is managed. This is done through a performance based in response to ambiguity rather than causing it.

Less controversy exists, therefore, as regards externally imposed ambiguity. Rather, it is accepted and communities are able to formulate strategies to overcome their marginalisation. The main reason for this is that the ambiguity in question has already defined how the social interactions take place. It does not serve as a disruption, but exists as an existing part of social relations. Because of this, ways of handling the ambiguity are accepted by others. It is not in itself a cause for social exclusion.

Towards a conclusion or further questions?

The results of this research therefore point towards a new understanding of identity. Such an understanding contributes to our understanding of social relationships, communities and the dynamics of inclusion, exclusion and control. However, although this understanding is started, it is also evident that potential exists for further research along these lines.

One area which may benefit from further examination is in sports sociology and the ways in which sport is used in academia. I have used sport as a context in which to study identity. It is both the cause and the result of ambiguity for the Jesters. Although an interesting context in its own right, the analysis of sport can go further in informing us of how communities perceive and represent each other, how they interact and how individuals are tied into the community. Yet much of this work has thus far been carried out by those people whose primary interest is not in sport, but instead is in history (Hobsbawm, 1993) or the social sciences (Billig, 1997). The relationship between sport, resistance and gender has been well-established, with extensive theoretical grounding, but similar research on community and sport has yet to be carried out. This indicates the potential for further research.

In addition, it is obvious that other groups possess ambiguous identities, and that by studying contexts in which identities are ambiguous, our understanding of identity is extended. For example, national identity is not ambiguous only on its territorial boundaries, but also on its social ones. How marginalised groups such as immigrants, racial, ethnic or religious minorities or groups such as the disabled are perceived and negotiate their membership with the national community is also an important part of how national identity is defined and performed. This is also true if one analyses the discourse surrounding national identity, in an era where it is assumed that national identity is declining, to be replaced by different identities. Has the rhetoric changed, and has national identity itself become ambiguous?

The potential for different methods of studying identity has also been made clear throughout. Community studies are an established means of studying social interaction, but it is rare that they have ever been analysed for more general identity studies. It is evident, however, that the ways people interact, behave and interpret symbols in their daily lives are

significant in how they come to identify themselves and are identified in turn. Attention needs to be paid to such issues.

Finally, strategies of identity management have also been reintroduced as an important theme in social research. Although concentrating on marginalised groups in society, it should be clear that most people deal with ambiguity or social exclusion as a result of their performances. The performances of social actors are, therefore, vital in determining which identity fits where and what hopes groups with ambiguous identities have to overcome their social marginalisation. If the ambiguity is caused by them through their behaviour, their strategies of identity management are less likely to be accepted.

In this case, the identity management strategies were relatively clear because of the particular context of the Jesters. Possessing two ambiguous identities, they illustrated both the manageable and the unmanageable, and the relationship between the two. They also performed these identities in a conscious and calculated manner, acting to resolve the ambiguity and social exclusion. What is not clear, however, is the extent to which people who are not in a similar social context handle their identities. As everyone possesses multiple identities, and as everyone operates in multiple social contexts with complex interactions, it is clear that identities must become problematised on a regular basis. This in turn affects their performance. How might these be studied in less clearly ambiguous contexts, and what results are likely? For example, environmentalism is an important issue in modern Western society. People increasingly define themselves as being 'environmentalists' or concerned about the environment. However, does their behaviour mirror such beliefs, or undermine their claims to such an identification? This type of study highlights the possibilities of examining contradictions in stated beliefs and practices such as this.

This study stemmed from an understanding of identity as a performance. The impact of such performances depends on social context. If the identity performed causes ambiguity, marginalisation and an inability to manage the identity are likely. If the performance is a response to externally imposed ambiguity, it is able to be managed and social inclusion is the probable result. It would be nice to be able to conclude this definitively. However, it seems clear that this research has raised rather more questions about identity and society than it answers.

In the meantime, the Jesters have started another season. Six new players have joined their ranks, with several players dropping out. The most recent result heard was a win on a forfeit. The other team were unable to turn out, causing celebrations among the Jesters and a night out in Bordertown:

> Oh well, you know? A result's a result. Even if we didn't play!'

Appendix 1:

Table of informants

In order to give a more complete sense of those individuals who informed this work, I have included below a list of my main informants. Although many of them were quoted directly in the work, some were not. Such individuals were interviewed or took part in discussions with me. It should not, however, be considered a complete list. Some individuals who were very helpful, are left off in the interests of protecting their identity. Their names are pseudonyms in order to preserve anonymity, and were chosen from the first letter of their surnames. The occupations and ages listed are approximate in order to further protect confidentiality.

Name	Age	Occuptaion	Sport	Local / Non-local
Belinda	18	Student	Rugby	Non-local
Bethany	24	Clerk	Rugby	Non-local
Bill	40	Process-worker	Rugby	Local
Ciara	32	Clerk	Rugby	Non-local
Dave	30	Electrician	Football	Local
David	30	Shop manager	Football	Local
Emily	25	Process worker	Rugby	Non-local
Evan	29	Electrician	Football	Non-local
Gary	21	Student	Rugby	Local
Henry	60	Retired	Rugby	Non-local
Jared	27	Panel beater	Football	Local
Kath	29	Accounts manager	Rugby	Local
Kieran	22	Student	Rugby	Local
Liam	32	Own business	Rugby	Local
Mark	53	Solicitor	Rugby	Local
Michael	26	Finance	Rugby	Local
Richard	29	Process worker	Football	Local
Wendell	24	Student	Rugby	Non-local
William	27	Process worker	Football	Local

Appendix 2: Published paper

Knowing your place: Gender and reflexivity in two ethnographies

Fiona Gill and Catherine Maclean
Sociological Research Online 7,2
http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/2/gill.html

> Through violating cultural norms, I had discovered that the boundaries between men's space and women's space are strongly marked and that if I wanted to continue with my fieldwork I must do so in a culturally acceptable manner - I must keep in my place.
>
> (Middleton 1986: 129)

Introduction

This article draws on the authors' experiences in two different British communities, conducting ethnographic research using a combination of methods including participant observation and tape-recorded interviews. Fiona Gill's research focused on issues of identity within a women's rugby team, the Jesters, based in 'Bordertown', a small town near the Scottish/English border, while Catherine Maclean's research examined migration and social change in 'Beulach', a remote rural parish in the north of Scotland. In both cases, while gender was not initially a focus of the research, it became increasingly salient during the fieldwork period. The article begins with a look at literature which the authors found particularly useful, examines each piece of research in turn, and then discusses the impact these experiences had on the subsequent approach to the research process. Much of the literature drawn on discusses the emotional work involved in research, and how it actually feels to carry out fieldwork. A description of the mechanics of research is not the aim of this paper. Rather, we are interested in putting our own experiences into an academic and emotional context. This context included what it was like doing fieldwork without having a detailed knowledge of the vast body of literature covering the impact of gender on fieldwork, and this is reflected in the literature discussed in the paper.

As the title indicates, a female ethnographer has certain limitations placed on her in terms of behaviour which may affect her ability to carry out research successfully. A woman who engages in the public realm in such a way may be perceived as stepping out of line, and in many instances, though this is not always verbalised, the behaviour of those around her serves to make her aware of her uneasy social position.

The awareness of gender stems from the fact that, in doing ethnographic fieldwork, ethnographers use themselves as the primary tool of the research. Who the researcher is, ultimately, determines the sort of ethnography that will be produced. As such, fieldwork must be understood as a relational process, and a reflexive approach is not only desirable but also necessary. Part of this involves the recognition of our selves as impacting and being impacted upon by the fieldwork:

> In recognizing that we are constructed, shaped and challenged by fieldwork, we can become more attuned to what is going on in the specific cultural settingÉFieldwork always starts from where we are. We do not

> come to a setting without an identity, constructed and shaped by complex social processes.
>
> (Coffey 1999: 158)

Recognising that the self is intimately connected with the completion of fieldwork is also part of recognising that variables such as gender (and of course others including age, nationality, ethnicity, etc.) will influence the outcomes of the research. This article argues that an increased awareness of gender may increase the awareness of the limitations placed on the researcher, but that it also brings certain advantages to the analysis of social situations, introducing different issues and new ideas. This paper is not meant to be a sweeping statement about ethnography in general, nor about the relative merits of female or male researchers. Rather, we argue that a more self-aware and reflexive approach benefits all ethnographic research, whether gender is a primary consideration or not.

Gender was chosen as the main focus for this paper because we realised that, in our roles as researchers, we had both been conscious of transgressing various bounds of acceptable feminine behaviour. Many of the issues discussed centred around how we performed the roles of young women and professional researchers, and the sometimes contradictory demands of each. The way in which we performed our gender roles was as important as how we performed our roles as researchers. If gender "must be readable at a glance" (Halberstam 1998: 23), in the behaviour of individuals, then tensions may arise between the roles of 'researcher' and 'woman'. Although appearing to be women fitting conventional notions of 'femininity', we were also behaving in ways which contradicted this, which could be disconcerting for both ourselves and people in our fieldwork areas.

In both accounts, gender roles were tied up in notions of sexuality and sexual norms and behaviours. Although gender cannot simply be reduced to sexuality, it is clear that gender and sexuality were linked in many factors of our experiences. Judgements were made on the appearance of us both, which resulted in expectations about our sexuality and sexual availability which had to be dealt with. As a result, sexuality is discussed in the article, particularly in its role in controlling the behaviour of researchers.

Though at times difficult, we found our experiences to be rewarding and positive. We experienced the 'buzz' of living somewhere new, getting to know new people and forging enduring relationships with the people of Beulach and Bordertown. This article should not, therefore, be read as a 'warning-off' to potential researchers about the problems accompanying this type of research. Rather, our aim is to explore some of our own experiences, and to try to reflect on the ways they informed our research, in the hope that these reflections may be of interest and use to others doing similar research.

It has been argued that the behaviour of female fieldworkers is often more closely scrutinised than that of male fieldworkers (Mascarenhas-Keyes 1987: 187), and many female ethnographers' accounts detail gender-specific issues and challenges that arose during their research (e.g. Moreno 1995: 220, Whitehead 1976, Middleton 1986). Female ethnographers often appear to be more aware of their sexual status and its impact on fieldwork and relationships than are their white, heterosexual male colleagues (Okely 1992: 19, Coffey 1999: 79). This is not a recent development. As a more reflexive approach to anthropological and ethnographic work was developed, notably during the 1970s though there are some earlier examples (see Okely and Calloway 1992: 8 for a summary), it became apparent that the biography of the researcher had a profound impact on the fieldwork being carried out. This was particularly noticeable if the researcher was a woman, when her

marital status, sexuality and general demeanour could determine the access granted to her. That this is true of men as well is obvious, but it seems that female researchers have been more aware of this issue, and so perhaps more likely to embrace a reflexive approach to research.

Bowen's *Return to Laughter* (1954) is an early example of a reflexive approach to ethnography and was an influential text for both of the current authors. It is significant not simply because it is an example of a woman carrying out fieldwork in a remote community, but also because it is written:

> as a human being, and the truth I have tried to tell concerns the sea change in one's self that comes from immersion in another and alien world.
>
> (Bowen 1954: Notes)

Though written as a 'fictional' account of fieldwork experiences, and published under a false name, it is nonetheless an extraordinarily personal and reflexive account of fieldwork. Though gender is not a major focus of the book, Bowen's accounts of her emotions and changes in perceptions highlight the intense relationship between the researcher and the researched. A dialogue of actions, words and meanings is established, leaving Bowen with an altered perspective (1954: 59). She surrenders control of her own perception of self and of the direction of the research, and in so doing allows herself to become immersed and significantly altered by her experiences.

Bowen's influence has been far-reaching. Golde (1986) cites her as filling a gap in ethnographic accounts, and inspiring more reflexive and personal accounts of fieldwork. *Women in the Field* (Golde 1986) collects such accounts from women exploring the impact of gender on their experiences. They also start to examine the effects of this impact on themselves and the nature of the relationship between ethnographer, field and self. Gender becomes the variable that is used to explore the ways in which 'the characteristics of the ethnographer may indirectly and inadvertently affect the process of research.' (Golde 1986: 2). It is certainly one of the first books which attempts to examine in depth what Golde describes as the 'impact of subjectivity' (Golde 1986: viii) on the field. There was a dearth of material thereafter, until this lack was addressed at a conference, from which came the book *Gendered Fields* (Bell *et al.* 1993). Kulick and Willson (1995) also attempt to deal directly with issues of subjectivity in the field, looking particularly at erotic and sexual subjectivity and including the perspectives of male as well as female ethnographers, although they note that it was much harder to find men willing to contribute to the volume (1995: xiii). They argue that issues of sex, gender and the sexuality of ethnographers have largely been ignored or silenced in the public setting. This is done through the normalisation of the subjectivity of the white male heterosexual ethnographer, marginalising women and non-heterosexual people:

> who risk their stake in mainstream anthropological debate, their 'respectability', and perhaps even their careers by discussing these problems too publicly.
>
> (Kulick and Willson 1995: 4)

However, by ignoring the erotic in the daily interchanges of life, a large part of experience is omitted. The ethnographer ceases to be a 'complete' person, being portrayed as a machine for the recording and analysis of data.

We attempt, in the remainder of this paper, to re-examine our own fieldwork experiences in a more reflexive light. As two young, single women carrying out research in rural settings, we became more aware of ourselves as gendered beings early in the research, and were both aware that gender would be an important factor in how our research was carried out. Access to certain types of knowledge and to certain social settings was easier as a woman. But we also found that gender had unexpected impacts on us as individuals, both positive and negative.

Fieldwork in Bordertown

This section is based on Gill's fieldwork experiences whilst researching her MSc and PhD. Initially examining issues of identity in 'Bordertown', a small town on the Scottish-English border, she concentrated on two different sports to see how ambiguous national and local identity were mediated within the town. Gill found herself having to adopt a more self-aware approach to the field and to her work because of the expectations placed on her as a young woman. This happened as a matter of some urgency, as she discovered that gender norms are somewhat different in Bordertown than in her native Australia.

Though aware intellectually that gender was an important factor to be considered during fieldwork, with hindsight Gill realised that relatively superficial attention had been paid to this issue, with the focus being on how her gender might impact on her access. Little or no thought was given to the impact of the research on Gill's own identity. By the end of the research, however, it was obvious that gender and Gill's identity as a woman had a substantial impact, not only on the field, but also on her own sense of self.

The research was carried out by Gill remaining based in Edinburgh and travelling to Bordertown on a regular basis. Participant observation was supplemented with 25 in-depth interviews over the course of three years. The research itself has been ongoing since 1999, with a break of twelve months in the middle between the MSc and PhD projects. Gill's MSc concentrated on the local football teams in and around Bordertown, and most of her time was spent with football players in various pubs and other social settings. The PhD examined the women's rugby team, the Jesters. In this instance, Gill joined the team as a player, training and travelling with the team over the course of two seasons whilst carrying out interviews and observation. At the outset, issues of local and national identity were the focus (as they were with the footballers), but gradually it became clear that the ways in which the players negotiated gender identity were equally important.

It became evident during the MSc that gender was an important issue and that it needed to be acknowledged. As a young, single woman, Gill represented something of an addition in terms of potential sexual partners for the men of Bordertown, and so was able to gain entry to the field relatively easily. However, it quickly became clear that there might be problems with this perception. In the first place, it was something of a shock to Gill. Moreno argues that:

> A central aspect of academic life . . . is the denial of gender at work. . . we are expected to study, administer, write, and teach as if gender did not matter.
>
> (Moreno 1995: 246)

This may ignore the emotional and social realities of fieldwork. Though the researcher may, as Gill did, consider herself to be basically a genderless entity whilst carrying out fieldwork, those people she is researching may not share this viewpoint. They may well see her instead as first and foremost a woman and treat her accordingly. The unexpected focus on Gill as a gendered and sexual being forced a rapid recalculation of how best to relate and behave in the field.

Interactions with the men ranged from mild flirting and sexual banter to explicit offers, the most memorable of which was an offer of a direct trade - an interview granted in return for sex. Gill decided that an interview with this informant was probably not crucial to the successful completion of fieldwork and declined. The experience did, however, open up new understandings of how Gill was being seen by her informants. Most men appeared to think that she was 'fair game' for sexual advances, due mainly to Gill's choice of research methods which neglected to take into account the sexual and gender norms of Bordertown. This profoundly affected her ability to carry out further research in that particular setting. Women in Bordertown do not spend a great deal of time in public with men, even men to whom they are related. In fact, the only women who do behave in such a way are those known to be sexually available and promiscuous. As a result, the women in Bordertown saw Gill as a sexual rival, due to Gill's novelty status, and therefore as a threat to their relationships. The split between Gill's initial perception of herself, as a 'professional' academic and the men's perception of her as a potential partner caused great confusion and some emotional turbulence as she struggled to fulfill her role as researcher, while attempting to eliminate the roles of a 'tidy bird' and 'easy' (as perceived by the women in Bordertown). Sexuality had become an issue and there seemed to be no way of resolving it. It became clear towards the end of the MSc fieldwork that the situation and relationships with the women could potentially deteriorate further.

Consequently, for the PhD research, Gill chose to study the 'Jesters', the women's rugby team in Bordertown. She hoped that by joining the team as a regular member, the women would be given the opportunity to get to know her personally, thus avoiding the earlier problems. It also gave Gill a recognised role in Bordertown, as a female rugby player. Though gender was still expected to be an issue, it was hoped some of the difficulties experienced earlier might be diminished, and this was certainly true in terms of how she was perceived as a sexual being by members of the rugby club. One result of the move, not immediately considered, was that by joining an ambiguous group such as this one, Gill was problematising her own gender identity. Women who play rugby are attributed an ambiguous gendered and sexual identity. They are women operating in a male domain, playing a man's game. As such their identity as feminine and heterosexual women is pulled into an ambiguous context (Hargreaves 1994:261).

This became clear as Gill realised that her identity as a rugby player would hold even when off the pitch, at 'home' in Edinburgh. Almost every social occasion became an opportunity for data collection. Gill was not considered to be a 'real' woman, but rather a kind of man/woman, outside the normal male-female dichotomy of gender. Women who discovered that she played rugby shied away, as if afraid that Gill was going to start flirting with them or, simultaneously, act very 'hard'. Men stopped flirting and began treating her as 'one of the boys' whilst also telling her that women should not play rugby. This, though academically interesting, proved to be somewhat socially wearing.

In order to carry out this type of research, Gill had to fit in with the team and behave as a woman rugby player is expected to. The difficulty here is that women rugby players flout

conventions of femininity, and so occupy a difficult social space in Bordertown and the rugby club. The men in Bordertown tend to be unsure of how to approach many of the women players. Access to members of the club at every level also had to be gained. This meant approaching men and speaking to them as equals, as a professional researcher, despite an already ambiguous social position.

Ultimately, some areas were closed to Gill as a woman. The end of season rugby club dinner was 'Men Only'. Participant-observation in the men's team was impossible. And Gill became aware that her gender was one of the first things that people noticed about her, particularly when discussing her participation in rugby. This enabled Gill to see and feel what it was like for women living in small towns who attempt to redefine their gender identities. She found that for those women who were known in other contexts within the town, some negotiation was possible, but that as an outsider, it was not readily available for Gill. This was compared to the relative freedom experienced by women, and Gill herself, in cities such as Edinburgh, to play sports like rugby and to renegotiate how they are seen.

Gill was also forced to reflect on how she felt about herself, her identity as a woman and her sexuality in ways which were simply not possible previously, as she found herself confronting contradictory rumours about her sexuality, caused by her flouting of gender norms. Simultaneously, the women's team suspected that she was lesbian, and the rest of the club assumed that she was heterosexual and promiscuous. The rumours were only brought to her attention after people had decided that she was neither threatening nor easy, that she was, in fact 'sound'.

The rumour of lesbianism was particularly problematic as it represented a direct challenge to Gill's own perception of her sexual identity as heterosexual as well as constituting a real threat to her continuing access to the team. For the Jesters, it was vitally important that the team be perceived as heterosexual, in a context where participation in a 'masculine' activity could lead to stigmatising assumptions about their sexuality (Cahn 1994: 164). For an outsider to be lesbian would have resulted in almost permanent ostracism, making fieldwork impossible. Gill felt vulnerable and angry that her participation in a gender-ambiguous activity meant that her sexuality was immediately redefined. A further irritant was that the main people doing the redefining were women who were also engaged in playing rugby!

For Gill, confronting other people's reactions to her activities and their perceptions of how women should behave also brought about a greater personal understanding of her identity as a woman. The rumour regarding her sexuality also involved her confrontation of her own insecurity regarding how other people perceived her as a woman, her sense of femininity and her sexuality. Because she was being confronted both by unfamiliar attitudes and also unexpected challenges to her own identity, she was able better to understand her team-mates who were undergoing similar challenges, and examine their motivations for behaving as they did. Reflecting on this experience undoubtedly benefited the research and data analysis.

Fieldwork in Beulach

By contrast to Gill, six years on from her fieldwork, Maclean reconsiders her experiences from a distance, although aiming to retain here some of the rawness and immediacy of reflections written at the time of her doctoral research. Overall, she empathises with Wilkins' reflection upon 'taking it personally' that 'it is hard to believe now, much less to

convey, how anxious I felt as I conducted my research' (1993: 95). Maclean has found revisiting her material to be a revealing and at times disconcerting shift in focus and perspective. Certain issues which loomed large at the time now seem relatively trivial, while other issues which were not acknowledged or did not seem salient at the time now stand out clearly in the light cast by subsequent reflection, reading and discussion with Gill.

Maclean's doctoral research examined social change and migration in remote rural areas, through a case study of 'Beulach', a parish in the Highlands of Scotland. She lived in Beulach for over 14 months during 1995-96. The data collected consisted of fieldnotes and over 30 taped interviews, supplemented by other sources such as the Census Small Area Statistics, the Register of Sasines[1] and local health and employment statistics. Although Maclean was not from Beulach, her family had long-standing ties to the area through their status as 'summer visitors', and many of her elderly interviewees had known her grandfather. Knowing and being known was largely beneficial to the research, and Maclean in this respect felt that her gender was an advantage. Being a grandson rather than a granddaughter would have entailed some pressure to live up to her grandfather's reputation for fishing, drinking and being 'good crack'[2]. Being female, young, non-local and a student, it fitted appropriate roles to be in a deferential, listening and learning mode, a mode which came relatively easily to Maclean, and was mainly of benefit to the process of data collection, with some qualifications discussed later.

Maclean had been aware that her gender would be an issue before moving to Beulach, from her reading and, crucially, stemming from her status as young and single, from her experience of living and working in the parish for a summer season some years prior to her doctoral research. Hoping to pre-empt any difficulties, Maclean tried, like other female fieldworkers, to be seen as 'understanding, sympathetic, sexually unavailable...Modest appearance and posture was a key element in the strategy' (Vera-Sanso 1993: 162). Shortly after returning from her fieldwork, Maclean wrote 'with hindsight, I can see it was probably a mistake to live like Mother Teresa for a year - I had thought being a model of good behaviour would be the most low-key, neutral and uninteresting thing I could do, but in fact it seemed to make me more intriguing and mysterious' (1997: 49 cf. Kulick 1995: 9). This was compounded by the fact that Beulach people seldom ask directly about such things. It was occasionally clear that people were speculating about why Maclean apparently had no male partner, but she was seldom directly asked about whether she had a boyfriend (and then only by non-local women who knew her quite well). Celibacy 'in the field' is perhaps appropriate when needed to retain standing and respect, but in fact it can be a problem - a puzzle for local people as you are not living like a normal adult (Dubisch, 1995; Gearing, 1995: 200; Killick 1995: 98). Maclean often wished she had been accompanied by a husband during her fieldwork. However, she recognised that this would only be 'easier' providing neither partner embarked on an affair, and were also not 'weird', as a female academic accompanied by house-husband would be regarded.

Before commencing her fieldwork, Maclean had written:

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[1]A register of the ownership and transfer of land and houses in Scotland. For further information see: Williams N.J. and Twine F.E. (1991) *A Research Guide to the Register of Sasines and the Land Register in Scotland: A Report to Scottish Homes*, Edinburgh: Scottish Homes.

[2]'crack' or 'craic' is friendly chat, gossip and the latest news. Someone who is 'good crack' is good fun to talk to.

> my long association with the area means that I am aware to an extent of how the appropriate way to behave differs from the urban, academic society I usually live in, but presumably I will also fail to notice or understand some things until after they have influenced people's impressions of me.
> (1997: 48)

This proved correct, but what she had failed to anticipate was how it would *feel*. It also became clear that there were certain factors relating to how she was perceived that she could influence, but certain factors were outwith her control. Moreover, she had assumed that learning the appropriate way for a woman in Beulach to behave, and then doing so, would be sufficient, and had not realised that she would be talked about regardless. She was told by different people 'it's just Beulach and you shouldn't take it to heart', but she found this advice hard to follow (although outwardly trying to make a good show of paying rumours no heed or laughing them off).

For example, Maclean had read that both Whitehead (1976) and Middleton (1986) had attempted to carry out fieldwork as a man would, for example going to pubs on their own. Maclean felt sure that even 20 years on from their research, this would not be wise in Beulach, even if it did not lead to such dramatic difficulties as those experienced by Whitehead and Middleton. However, although Maclean had thought that going to the pub in company would be acceptable, she realised that a great deal of attention was paid to who she was talking with. Eventually, she ended up going to the pub fairly infrequently, and even this was not unproblematic, since one rumour about her having an affair seemed to have stemmed from being seen having a drink with the man in question in a small group where the other members were not known in the village.

Maclean tried not to appear to be flirting with men (successful to the extent that one of the first rumours she heard about herself was that she was a lesbian), and not to be alone with them in their houses or other places away from the public sphere. However, she wrongly assumed that it would be innocuous to talk to a man in a public place (until she discovered this had been held up as 'evidence' that she was having an affair with a particular man). Another person told her that what was causing difficulties was that she 'was interested in everybody, and really listened to what they said, and looked at them when they were talking'. The speaker went on to say that she knew Maclean was the same when she was speaking to people whether male, female, old or young, but that many Beulach men would take it as sexual interest (cf. Willson, 1995: 268). Maclean felt very frustrated by this: how could she 'do ethnography' without being interested in everyone, listening, etc.? However, Moreno states that 'In a field situation, the mere fact that one is a single female anthropologist doing her own thing may present an intolerable provocation to some individuals' (1995: 220), so perhaps Maclean was lucky to have as little trouble as she did. Attitudes to gender and sexuality were certainly different from the university city circles she was used to moving in (e.g. attitudes were generally homophobic; and in nearly all scandals it seemed that men were regarded as morally weak and therefore not culpable, unlike women who were generally blamed).

It is difficult to resolve these sorts of issues: obviously one approach is to concentrate on the lives of women. However, Maclean had not wanted to do this exclusively, although in practice she did eventually spend more time with women and became increasingly cautious about interactions with men.

One woman who grew up in Beulach but had lived in cities for much of her adult life reiterated strongly that there was nothing Maclean could do that would protect herself totally from gossip - just being who she was, regardless of behaviour, could provoke envy, as Maclean was educated, and free to leave Beulach, not 'trapped' by marriage or children. This echoes Willson:

> I would suggest that nearly any woman outsider who cannot be controlled by the norms of the dominant society is typecast as loose: loose because she is truly independent, and because she is not controlled by the male-ordered society. (1995: 263)

Maclean found the focus on her femininity and sexuality a difficult aspect of her fieldwork. She found it difficult not feel hurt by gossip, despite knowing from the literature and from her participant observation that this was a major feature of village life, and even meant that to a degree she was seen as 'belonging'. When gossiped about she wanted to withdraw from village life, but she found that acting guilt-free and confident was the best defusing measure (although she also discovered that it is amazing how guilty one starts to feel in such circumstances, even when innocent of what one is supposed to have done (cf. Parman 1990)). Without evidence to feed the flame, stories about Maclean died down to be replaced by the next scandal about someone else. However, no doubt there are still some people in Beulach who think of Maclean as the lesbian/the one who wrecked the Macleods' marriage/the gold-digger who nearly married the local landowner, etc.

Despite disliking the focus on her femininity and sexuality, Maclean found it fascinating to try to analyse the processes and values involved. Indeed, this had a direct academic benefit - resulting eventually in the exploration of gossip, conflict, and the use of humour, which has been viewed as the strongest part of her thesis. So, the rather uncomfortable experience of having her awareness of herself as female heightened, ultimately meant she learned a lot about Beulach (and about ethnographic methods) through attitudes towards her as a woman. She also found that her awareness of herself as female was heightened. Fieldwork also effectively pointed out to Maclean that no matter what she decided about her appearance and behaviour and how well she adhered to these decisions, ultimately she could not choose how other people chose to see her.

There are also three aspects to Maclean's fieldwork experience that she found difficult to tackle in the thesis and/or has become more aware of subsequently.

Firstly is the issue of significant relationships. Maclean's partner is from the fieldwork area, and she would not begin a relationship with him until after the fieldwork was completed. It felt important to keep as clear a boundary as possible between being 'a researcher' and being 'a person' - despite the fact that she did not agree intellectually with attempts to make such a distinction. Rationally, she felt it was unnecessary, but also knew that she would feel uncomfortable and as if flouting an unwritten code of honour on 'good ethnography' if she acted otherwise (cf. discussion of ethnography's implicit directives and unwritten rules in Dubisch 1995: 30 and Kulick 1995: 10). Maclean found that friends, including the man in question, were supportive of her wish not to embark on a new relationship during her fieldwork, although they could not quite understand why she felt this was necessary. Another particularly important set of relationships during the fieldwork and subsequently was that with the family who were her 'fictive kin'. Fictive kinship is a recurring theme in the collection *Gendered Fields* (1993) and Maclean was interested to discover that her relationship with her 'landlady' was very similar to that of, for example, O'Brien and her

landlady (1993: 235-239). Writing this paper, Maclean was amused to realise clearly for the first time that by doing her fieldwork she had created 'fictive kin' links that fulfilled a childhood wish to be a daughter/sister in this particular family.

Secondly, several years' distance from her fieldwork enabled Maclean to confront more directly that it was not simply being 'a woman' that caused the particular situations she faced in her fieldwork. Rather, it was being a woman who fitted most of the criteria of sexual desirability in that cultural context — a young, long-haired, blue-eyed, slender and toned (Bordo 1990: 88) woman. Maclean was aware of this at the time but found it impossible to acknowledge directly. It was also highlighted on subsequent return trips to the fieldwork area, when many people reacted with visible dismay to her short hair and change in weight.

Finally, although Maclean was always aware that she felt a strong emotional connection to the place and landscape of her fieldwork area, working on this paper has caused her to reflect on the ways this might connect with what she had thought of as gender issues. Altork is notable for her discussion of the 'intense emotional reaction to landscape' (1995: 117) and how this connects with sensuality. Many ethnographers note that a heightened state of emotions is part of fieldwork, and especially first fieldwork. Although parts of her fieldwork were difficult, for much of the time Maclean revelled in living in the area. Thinking back, and even looking at photographs from the period, Maclean can see how this sense of positive well being was quite tangible and may well have affected others' response to her.

Discussion and conclusions

Though the two accounts are comparable, there are some differences that are worthwhile pointing out. Maclean's account is written from the standpoint of being out of the field. She has experienced some shifts in perspective as a result of that distance, and also as a result of work done since. Gill, while aiming to be reflexive, writes whilst still in the thick of the research, so lacks the distance required for some sorts of reflection. The issues and emotions are still raw and, in some instances, ongoing.

Maclean went into the field as a 'known' entity, with family connections and holidays spent there working. The sense of being familiar was partially due to Maclean's prior contact with the area, but also because she shared the nationality of many of her respondents. Gill entered the field as a complete outsider, not only unknown in the town and district, but also from another continent, complete with alternative patterns of behaviour and interaction. Her immersion into the culture of rural Britain was sudden and shocking. Behaviour considered normal in Australia was definitely not normal in Bordertown, particularly with regards gender norms and patterns of interaction between men and women. Thus the authors' immediate preconceptions and experiences were totally different. Maclean entered the field knowing some of what to expect. Gill's experience was very much one of feeling her way in the dark, having no context in which to place her experience.

Finally, whilst Maclean's academic background had been in sociology, Gill's was in politics and history. Therefore, Maclean had more awareness that gender was going to be an issue, and some ideas about how to deal with it. Gill went into the field and learned by experience, reading the relevant literature during (or indeed after) specific issues arose in terms of the methodology of the research. In some ways, therefore, Gill went in with a relatively naive attitude, whereas Maclean was more intellectually prepared.

Both experienced a gap between the intellectual issue of gender, and the emotional and social reality - that people would treat us like women with all of the social and sexual expectations this entails, not like researchers. As Maclean said 'what she had failed to anticipate was how it would *feel*'. Neither of us were ready for the sense of powerlessness and dismay resulting from our lack of control over how we were perceived.

This was both loss of control of the direction of the research and also loss of control in terms of their self-presentation. A woman entering a male-dominated setting is often the target of innuendo, rumour and boasting. A female ethnographer, though, is expected to deal with this situation such that the research does not suffer. Who she is, is sublimated to the needs of the research:

> Identity and selfhood are primarily viewed relatively impersonally, and in terms of achieving successful access and research results.
>
> (Coffey 1999: 5)

If a female researcher behaves in a way that is necessary in order to collect data, she may lose the respect of those she is studying. If she does not, she may be unable to carry out the research. The issue becomes reduced to the question of 'how much of the 'self' should be sacrificed for the sake of the data?' (Pettigrew 1981: 70). For many women this is a dilemma that is not easily resolved. If the compromise between self and data becomes too much, the researcher may be forced to walk away.

At a presentation of an earlier version this paper, a colleague commented that we did not really address the split that exists between the identity of the researcher as a researcher and as a woman. In response to this, Gill noted at the time that 'I struggle to put boundaries round my identity but others won't let me.' This may be read as a reaction to the difficulties experienced in all ethnographic research, and is not necessarily limited to female researchers. What seems to be at issue here is the desire experienced to do 'proper' research and the dilemma experienced when people stop treating you as a researcher and stranger, and start treating you as a person and friend. What is to be done with the information given in such situations? One possible strategy, to try to avoid possible ethical and moral complications, is to draw a boundary around the 'real' part of the researcher's identity - them as a person. Unfortunately, this boundary is not recognised by the people being researched, and is continually crossed. Both authors noticed the crossing of this boundary in the way they were treated as young women rather than as researchers. Being seen as women, rather than researchers, they were expected to behave in gender-appropriate ways, although these sometimes contradicted the needs of the research role.

Gender became problematised, and as such, the authors' identities as women and researchers became difficult to deal with. This has been experienced by other female ethnographers, notably Altork who wrote:

> I was a highly visible presence. As a result, I became more visible to myself – as a female – over time. Having my gender reflected so consistently by those with whom I came in contact brought me ultimately to a point where I became more aware of myself as a gendered being.
>
> (1995: 131-132)

Most of these difficulties arose from the issue of how to deal with being perceived as a woman who was out of her place, who was behaving in unconventional ways. When this

occurred, people in the communities talked, in ways which the researcher was unable to control, but also in ways which felt like a direct attack on the authors' own identities. Much of the discussion revolved around the authors' sexuality, and forced them to confront their own sense of gender and sexuality, as well as the norms of the society they found themselves in.

This is perhaps not surprising, as there is a strong link between gender and sexuality. Most of the rumours arose as a result of people watching the ways Maclean and Gill interacted with others in public. Although in some instances, their behaviour was entirely in keeping with their perceived gender roles, at the same time the needs of their research dictated a willingness to become involved and engaged with a wider range of people than is otherwise usual for women in these settings. This interaction with people, and also their relatively privileged position as educated and independent, made Maclean and Gill different from other women in their fieldwork areas. Their visible departures from their gender roles were more simply explained in terms of their sexuality, as part of their gender role, rather than as being part of doing ethnography. As a result, the authors' sexuality was of interest to everyone else precisely because of their identities as women. This interest took the form of sexual passes, rumours regarding sexuality, and speculation about possible relationships in the field. Both authors experienced concern not simply because of the pain that some of these rumours caused them, but also because these rumours potentially affected other people too.

Each author experienced a sense of distance, and disbelief, that the stories being circulated were, in any sense, related to her, so distant were they from her own sense of identity. The only way to counter such perceived attacks on the self seemed to be to be open and to laugh about what was being said. But an increased awareness of how to behave, and of the constraints placed on women in the fieldwork area was the ultimate result.

This awareness had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, certain areas of knowledge were not available to them. Maclean found it necessary to obtain 'chaperones' to enter some areas of Beulach's social life, and discovered that it was nearly impossible to enter others, with or without a sponsor. Gill found that getting some men to talk to her was impossible thanks to her membership of the women's team, and that some public spaces were not open to her.

On the other hand, different areas became accessible and more significantly, the experiences recounted here benefited the research and analysis of both authors, encouraging a more reflexive approach towards ethnography and research. For Gill, still writing up her PhD, these experiences and the writing of this paper have informed the ways in which the end of her fieldwork has been carried out, and also the writing up of her PhD. This is necessarily going to affect how her experiences and data are analysed. For Maclean, as already mentioned, her thesis was strengthened. In addition, she deliberately chose to do post-doctoral research that drew on ethnographic methods but did not involve living in the communities involved in the project.

The starting point was Middleton's comment that she must 'keep in her place' (1986: 129) in order to do successful research. Although this is necessary if one is to be able to become part of a community and relate to people, our experiences and reflection indicate that occasionally transgressing norms is a valuable and necessary part of research. It is difficult to see how one could avoid doing this and still be able to study anything at all. Although sometimes personally uncomfortable, ultimately the insights gained by leaving one's place

have academic and personal benefits. Maclean's remaining in her place and adopting a socially familiar and deferent role which was also gender appropriate enabled her to gain access to different areas of life in Beulach. This role did, however, involve her negation of sexuality and attempts to be as uninteresting as possible, and it was the 'collapse' of this that led to improvements in her analysis and subsequently in her thesis. Gill, however, adopted a socially ambiguous role by joining a group of women who did step from their places. In doing this she learnt a great deal not only about their situation, but also about herself and her own identity.

The aim of this paper was not to provide a review of the literature analysing the effects of gender on ethnography. Rather, it was an attempt to describe our own experiences of conducting research without detailed knowledge of and reflection upon this literature, and the impact that this had on our data and on ourselves. We are convinced that reflexivity is necessary for both effective research and for assisting the researcher to acknowledge the impact of the research on their own identity. In our discussions, we agreed it would have been helpful to us at the outset of our doctoral work, if more accounts of 'first fieldwork', discussing the less-than-perfect reality and sometimes emotionally difficult nature of the experiences had been available. This paper constitutes a small step in that direction.

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